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How Socialism Began

Russia under Lenin's Leadership
1917-1923



PROGRESS PUBLISHERS
MOSCOW

Translated from the Russian by *David Fiddon*

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КАК НАЧИНАЛСЯ СОЦИАЛИЗМ.
РОССИЯ ПРИ ЛЕНИНЕ В 1917-1923 гг.

На английском языке

First printing 1977

© Издательство «Молодая гвардия», 1974 г.

© Translation into English, Progress Publishers, 1977

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

A $\frac{11301-650}{014(01)-77}$ 45-77

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INTRODUCTION

Momentous changes have taken place in the world since the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia. But its repercussions, like the effects of socialist construction in the USSR, still make themselves felt in literally all countries, in major and minor developments on their social scene. The reputed British historian Edward Carr called the October Revolution "one of the great turning-points in history, comparable with the French revolution and perhaps surpassing it in significance".¹

Similar assessments have been made by researchers whose views are far from liberal or Left-wing. Even the most die-hard anti-communists cannot deny the great indestructible power of the ideas of the October Revolution. Philosopher and historian Sidney Hook, in disrepute among progressive US intellectuals and students, wrote: "In one way or another all my conscious life since adolescence seems to have been dominated by the Russian Revolution of 1917."² There is no disputing the fact that the October Revolution has become a nightmare for all anti-communists. They strive to exorcise it, but the spirit of the October Revolution, living and forceful, again and again finds itself embodied in more and more varied forms.

Soviet people regard October 1917 as one of the greatest milestones in the history of their country. This theme is always topical and closely linked with the vital interests of one and all. Books about the Revolution are

¹ E. H. Carr, *Studies in Revolution*, New York, 1964, p. 210.
² *Problems of Communism*, March-April 1967, p. 76.

constantly in great demand. Scientists, writers, journalists keep returning to the events which took place more than half a century ago; they keep referring to the literary heritage left behind by Lenin, the organiser of the socialist revolution and the first head of the Soviet state. They read and re-read his works, each time in a slightly new way, introducing into Lenin's vision the atmosphere of today. And conversely, Lenin himself helps us in acquiring a better idea of today and of more clearly discerning the future.

The October Revolution, Lenin and Leninism have organically entered our turbulent epoch, providing a key to understanding the involved and multifarious processes which, taken together, comprise social development and a compass which indicates its paths and helps to guide it.

General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Leonid Brezhnev stated in the CC Report to the 25th CPSU Congress: "The present achievements of the Soviet people are a direct projection of the cause of the October Revolution. They are the practical embodiment of the great Lenin's ideas. Our Party is and always will be faithful to this cause, to these ideas!"¹

Naturally, great changes have taken place in the world since Lenin's death and numerous new problems have arisen which could have hardly been foreseen in the first quarter of the twentieth century. But the regularities of socialist development discovered by Lenin make it possible to cope with them, too.

The influence exerted by Lenin and his ideas is felt far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. In working out their policies and practical measures, the Communist parties guiding social development in other socialist countries also draw on the vast, instructive experience of

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Report of the CPSU Central Committee and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy. 25th Congress of the CPSU*, Moscow, 1976, p. 7.

socio-political guidance accumulated in the early period of Soviet rule when Lenin stood at the head of the Bolshevik Party. It would be hard to grasp the entire significance of the changes taking place in the developing socialist-orientated countries without making a thorough study of Lenin's plan of socialist transformations in revolutionary Russia. One can hear the echo of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions in Russia and feel the direct and indirect impact of Lenin's ideas inspired by revolutionary practice in the struggle of the modern working class for democratic, socialist changes in the advanced capitalist countries where broad sections of the working people are joining the ranks of the anti-monopoly coalition. In the final analysis, it is thanks to the October Socialist Revolution, to that new factor of human history whose foundation was laid by Lenin, that each bourgeois government must take into account the position of world socialism in planning and carrying through any major socio-political measure.

In the face of these incontrovertible facts even Leonard Shapiro, a British Sovietologist, and other confirmed anti-communists recognise the everlasting social significance of the ideas and practical activity of Lenin "whose personal impact on events both in his own country and in the world outside may well have been greater than that of any other individual in this century".¹

Needless to say, there are also authors who on the basis of unique features of the contemporary epoch such as the scientific and technological revolution, for example, regard Lenin's contribution to the development of social thinking and social changes as a great phenomenon, but one which wholly belongs to history. Yet, all one has to do is to take a closer look at Lenin's activity and his ideas—something which is easier to do today, for as the

¹ *Lenin: the Man, the Theorist, the Leader. A Reappraisal*. Ed. by Leonard Shapiro and Peter Reddaway, London, 1967, p. 19.

Russian poet Sergei Yesenin said: "Great deeds are seen as such in time"—to arrive at the conclusion that the striking difference between the present political and social conditions and those in 1917 is due above all to the October Socialist Revolution, which proved to be an unprecedented catalyst of world social development. And the reason why the democratic forces today are fighting in other conditions and by other means than in 1917, is that the appropriate conditions had been created by the results of the socialist revolution in Russia.

Being the fullest embodiment and reflection of Lenin's activity, this revolution ushered in the era of defeats for capitalism. In this sense it has contributed to each modern revolution and to each perceptible democratic change. The era ushered in by the October Revolution forced capitalism to adapt to the new situation. There is no denying the fact that such a modernisation of capitalism to a certain extent corresponds to the fundamental interests of that social system inasmuch as in this way it solves, or makes an effort to solve, the new problems which arise before it. But at the same time it is indisputable that modernising reforms introduce into capitalism potential elements of its decay and future acute contradictions. In a letter to Maxim Gorky written prior to the First World War, Lenin noted that the self-reformation of capitalism, its transformation into "democratic" capitalism extends its basis and simultaneously hastens its demise. "Democratic capitalism," he noted, is "the last of its kind. It has no next stage to go on to. The next stage is death," and added that "except through the growth of capitalism there is no guarantee of victory over it".¹

Therefore when we speak of the world historic influence of the revolutionary transformations which took place between 1917 and 1923, the period covered in this

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, pp. 438-39.

book, we have in mind the indirect as well as the direct influence of the October Revolution, of Lenin personally and Leninism on world events. Of course, world development does not at all follow the path of direct adoption of the forms of activity of the Russian proletariat of that period. But the greatness of the October Revolution of 1917 lies in that its victory has provided opportunities for the development of the world revolutionary movement in other forms than before and created a new alignment of forces in the world conducive to the realisation of these opportunities.

It is only natural that we should turn to Lenin. But it would be profoundly alien to Leninism, this eternally living and developing teaching, to turn its founder into an icon.

Generally speaking, it is in the nature of bourgeois-idealistic philosophy of history to treat outstanding political leaders as charismatic personalities. The well-known British historian Arnold Toynbee regards Lenin as an immortal and supremely eminent figure because, in particular, he revived dogmatic religious faith which is akin to Orthodox intolerance. But such an understanding of the Bolshevik revolutionary spirit is simply a dangerous distortion of Lenin's confidence in the future of Russia's working class based on a deeply-rooted scientific conviction and which, in spite of its emotional colouring, was exceptionally rational. *Therein* lies the essence of Lenin's revolutionism.

Leninism is a guide to the daily, never-ending struggle, while the practice of Leninism is the practice of revolutionary attitude to reality. It is extremely important fully to appreciate the great scientific courage and exceptional clearness of purpose which Lenin had to possess as the founder and leader of the party of a new type, as the creator of a plan for the socialist transformation of backward Russia, as the herald of the new revolutionary era.

Lenin had to counterpose his revolutionary programme of action to the social-reformist world outlook which laid claim to revolutionism and seemed to exert undivided influence on the advanced, organised portion of the working class; he had to challenge such prominent ideological and political leaders of the Second International as Karl Kautsky who right up to the First World War enjoyed incontestable authority with the international working-class movement.

All Lenin's works are permeated with a creative, profound knowledge of Marx and Marxism, an understanding which provided him with an extensive basis for theoretical and practical activity. He aimed irony at those Social-Democrats in Russia and other countries who believed that Marxism could be learned mechanically, that it could be codified, so to say. Pondering over the unexplored paths of the revolution in Russia, Lenin wrote not long before his death: "It need hardly be said that a textbook written on Kautskian lines was a very useful thing in its day. But it is time, for all that, to abandon the idea that it foresaw all the forms of development of subsequent world history."¹ These words mirror his political courage, both as a man and a statesman, his ability to breast the tide and lead the masses.

Being a scholar and politician possessing a science-based understanding of reality and endowed with political intuition, Lenin was able to find a way out of the most difficult, seemingly hopeless situations, in which some of his associates lost their heads, to remain optimistic even in the gravest periods of history, to keep up the spirit and combat readiness of his Party enabling it to live through the most painful and sanguinary trials and simultaneously to gain in strength, while other parties quitted the political scene in quick succession.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 480.

Lenin's theory of socialist revolution did not emerge all at once. It was continuously corrected and perfected by Lenin and his Party as they accumulated practical experience and analysed it, and thus ensured the continuous development of this theory.

Lenin's theory is full and comprehensive. It is not a collection of dogmas; it is a living, ever-developing "open" theory which means that it can and has to be actualised. This is being done by the world communist movement, above all in the documents of the international meetings of Communist parties generalising the entire diversity of the experience of individual countries advancing towards socialism and communism. As regards the CPSU, it considers that "Marxism-Leninism derives its power from its constant and creative development. That is what Marx taught. That is what Lenin taught. Our Party will always be loyal to their precepts".⁴

The documents of the 25th CPSU Congress which are a programme of the further advance of the Soviet Union and also contribute to the progress of all advanced, genuinely socialist world forces are a vivid manifestation of such a creative development of Marxism-Leninism by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Lenin's courage as a political leader stemmed from his genuinely scientific approach to politics, an approach completely devoid of all solemnity and which was a combination of revolutionary enthusiasm and exact calculation. Underlining the intricacy of politics Lenin wrote that it "is more like algebra than arithmetic, and still more like higher than elementary mathematics".² Such an approach, however, did not preclude but, on the contrary, envisaged creative inspiration and therefore Lenin treated politics as an art as well as a science.

⁴ L. I. Brezhnev, *Report of the CPSU Central Committee... 25th Congress of the CPSU*, p. 86.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 102.

Since time immemorial the science of politics and the art of politics developed independently of each other. Great thinkers who created political science usually sustained serious reverses whenever they launched upon practical state activity. Wise Plato who was invited as adviser to Dionysius, Tyrant of Syracuse, became the subject of mistrust and intrigues and was forced to return to Athens. Niccolo Machiavelli who faithfully served the Florentine Signory in the capacity of foreign secretary was dismissed from office and exiled. The reason was not so much the incompetence of the scholars, but rather the fact that the political systems they devised were utopian and could not be translated into reality in their contemporary exploiting society.

In Lenin's activity politics as a science and as an art formed an organic whole. His flexibility, manoeuvrability and perspicacity as a politician always signified that he was highly principled in this field. Making use of his political art he never lost sight of his Party's ultimate aim, the building of a just society, an aim which could not be achieved with means that were alien to its substance.

The favourite thesis of bourgeois Sovietologists is the assertion about the contrast between Marx the "theoretician" and Lenin the "politician". Bertram D. Wolf of the United States alleges that in contrast to Marx's love for people "the most obvious trait setting Lenin apart from his associates was his absorption with the mechanics and dynamics of organisation".¹ In effect, however, it was Lenin's Marxism, his thorough theoretical grounding, on the one hand, and his humanistic clearness of purpose, his feeling and expression of the most profound popular interests, on the other, that made him confident in the correctness of his political line.

All his conscious life Lenin "consulted Marx", thinking

¹ *The Comintern—Historical Highlights*, Ed. by Milorad Drachkovitch and Branke Lazitch, New York-London, 1966, p. 23.

and rethinking the works of his teacher. But in different years this process followed a different course. As a youth who first began to study Marx, Lenin steeped himself in his intricate but harmonious system of thinking, becoming acquainted with his concepts and simultaneously rejecting certain canons which formerly seemed axiomatic but which failed to stand up to the logic of Marxism. As a young man and by then a highly-educated Marxist he could easily find his bearings not only in the labyrinth of Marx's *Capital* but also in many works written by the founder of scientific socialism which were unknown to the overwhelming majority of that section of intellectuals in Russia of those years who called themselves Marxists. As a sociologist Lenin daily referred to Marx's works to check his own scientific conclusions.

As the recognised leader of a revolutionary party, Lenin used the long years of exile to reread and rethink works he already knew and to study formerly unknown Marx's works, including his letters which at first seemed to be of little importance but from which he managed to glean many unduly forgotten remarks concerning the theory of socialist revolution. Finally, as head of socialist state, enormously overburdened with work and in spite of its incredible, exhausting tempo, Lenin referred to Marx to find answers to questions, which were of concern to him and the country (although Marx, naturally, could not have foreseen all the trials and unexpected turns of events with which the new revolutionary society would have to cope), to discover the correct road and choose the best possible decision on the basis of his works. In other words, Lenin swept the dust of the archives from Marx where he was confined by the reformist leaders of the Second International, and returned him for the revolutionary movement. That is why we are absolutely justified in calling Leninism twentieth-century Marxism.

It can hardly be expected that all people who want to will be able to master Lenin as Lenin had mastered

Marx. But to grasp his understanding of Marxism, to "include" Lenin into their thinking apparatus and into their decision-making machinery is something which they can do. It is gratifying that an ever greater number of people are acquiring a creative understanding of Lenin's works, and in doing so become less and less fettered in their own thinking and are able not only to look into history, but also to glimpse the future.

As we find it ever more necessary to consult Lenin in our daily activity we become aware that his books, articles and notes contain certain details which we simply overlooked in the past but which now seem to be very significant because they help us to acquire a full idea of his image and his manner of thinking. And, at the same time, when we begin more or less to find our bearings in dozens of volumes of his works we start to see, and even physically sense the dynamism of his thought, its development and its steadfast enrichment.

It is common knowledge that in the opinion of some people Leninism appeared all at once and in complete form as a science containing information on all the possible intricacies of future events. This conception is permeated with their justified admiration. Yet it is incorrect, and not only because it substitutes prophesying for scientific prevision, but also because it deprives Leninism of its intrinsic dynamics and destroys the tightly wound spiral of Lenin's thoughts and actions. Such an approach can lead to a distortion of his thoughts, and it is not by accident that Maoists and other ultra-"Left" dogmatists are manipulating with quotations from his works in order to "prove" monstrous illogicalities; it would be a thankless and, more, a hopeless task to repulse them with quotations from Lenin. In order fully to grasp a conclusion drawn by Lenin and consequently to determine how it can be applied in a broader and more general sense, it is necessary to place it in its exact historical context.

Nothing can be more instructive, especially for young people entering the realm of political thinking, than to penetrate the laboratory of Lenin's thought. And since in this book we shall be examining Lenin's theory of socialist revolution it will be no less important to trace its formation, to ascertain how it developed, was concretised, acquired substance and matured into a comprehensive programme outlining the contours of the future, than to see its final conclusions.

But Leninism is not Lenin alone. His teaching reflects the immense and manifold activity of Russia's and the world's working class, of the revolutionary people of Russia.

By 1917 the art of politics, which had a history of several thousand years, had in the opinion of serious observers attained the height of perfection.

The Frenchman Georges Clemenceau was justly regarded as the "destroyer of ministries" and became an acknowledged specialist in the sphere of parliamentary intrigue, and his compatriot Aristide Briand successfully vied with him in the field of political oratory. Jealous of Bismarck's fame, Kaiser Wilhelm II looked upon politics as a game of poker and was prone to bluff, sometimes successfully, but more often not. In the United States, Theodore Roosevelt invigorated the ancient art with the spirit of adventurism and resourcefulness. The Englishmen Disraeli, Gladstone and Salisbury became virtuosi in the art of politics and unsurpassed masters of the diplomatic game in their top-level dealings with their foreign counterparts, but never became leaders of the masses.

But Lenin, whose outward appearance was in direct contrast to the haughty deportment of those statesmen, opened a new chapter in the history of political art. He discovered and proved in practice that the masses, mass movements are a paramount factor of political development. By lowering politics from its pedestal and bringing

it out of the sanctuaries of secret cabinets he multiplied its creative force.

French historian André Maurois recounted an episode which took place when Woodrow Wilson was being sworn in as President of the United States in 1913. After kissing the Bible the new President raised his eyes and observing that the police were keeping the public at a distance from the tribune exclaimed, "Let the people come forward."¹

American historians admire this phrase, considering it singularly democratic. Indeed this phrase most accurately characterises Wilson, his personal sincerity and the falsity of his political aims, his unsuccessful search for the Blue Bird of people's trust, and the lamentable end of his presidency.

It was a phrase which Lenin, a politician with fundamentally different views and starting positions, would have never uttered. He had no need to overcome the distance separating him from the people, because he was at one with the people. The crux of the matter here was the very substance of the system whose establishment became the task of his life.

The change which took place in the political function of the masses was perhaps most strikingly demonstrated by the popular slogan of the revolutionary years: each housewife must be able to administer the state. In traditional bourgeois democracies the people were the well-spring of state power and the bulwark of great revolutionaries from Washington and Jefferson to Danton and Robespierre; and yet formerly the people, with the exception of short periods of revolution, were always the object and not the subject of history, its weapon and not its maker. Lenin's words about the general participation of the masses in state administration denoted a radical

¹ André Maurois, *Histoire parallèle. Histoire des Etats-Unis de 1917 à 1961*, Paris, 1962, p. 44.

change in the function of the people which henceforth were to play an active role in the affairs of the state.

In the epoch of so-called classical capitalism there was a clear line between those who lead and those who are led, between professional politicians and the masses whom they manipulated. Lenin's plan of including literally all working people into state administration put an end to political professionalism on one-sixth of the land surface of the world, and forced the governments on the other five-sixths to curtail this professionalism and take into account the people's desire for democracy. And if today the American sociologist Seymour Lipset describes the man-in-the-street as a "political man"¹ he is able to do so because in the final analysis the appearance of such a man was due to the efforts of Lenin and his Party.

October 1917 witnessed the beginning of history's greatest social transformation which in an incredibly short historical period produced results that changed the entire image of the world. The makers of the revolution and the builders of socialism in Russia had the courage to set out along an unexplored path on which their earlier plans were only of a limited value. Their courage is an example. And if there were mistakes, they were sufficiently instructive not to be repeated. Those who turn their back on the past will not understand the present. History is a touchstone that tests man's world outlook.

The popular nature of Leninism and the fact that Lenin's plan of socialist revolution is inseparable from the revolutionary activity of the masses makes it necessary to examine the theory and practice of this plan as a single entity.

Inasmuch as this book examines fundamental socio-political processes which had formed the essence of the

¹ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics*, New York, 1960.

revolution, or which it itself had engendered, the author deliberately does not touch upon certain other important aspects, cultural or national, of the revolution. In recent years, however, so many instructive works on Soviet history have been published in the USSR, and not only of a general character but also dealing with individual problems, that an inquiring reader will be able to obtain a more or less complete picture of the development of Soviet society.¹

The reader will not fail to notice that the author constantly refers to Lenin, to his works and not only because he analyses the dynamics of Lenin's thoughts and actions, but also because Lenin's works contain a compressed record of the history of the establishment of Soviet society. Slightly over five years separate the October armed insurrection from the last attack of Lenin's serious illness. But these years have been packed to the brim with momentous, truly historic events. And all of them are dealt with in the books, pamphlets, articles, speeches, letters, notes, official documents and their drafts written by Lenin. It is not surprising that his writings of those years take up 16 thick volumes of his *Collected Works*.

This book is not a detailed historical study. It is rather a sociological essay describing the Soviet road to socialism against the background of the first five years of the October Revolution, and in which the author concentrated on those aspects which in his opinion are most essential for comprehending the current development of the world. And if the reader obtains some new information which will help him to enhance this understanding and the relevance of Lenin's works to present-day conditions, the author will consider that he has achieved his purpose.

¹ See M. P. Kim, *Cultural Revolution in the USSR 1917-1965*, Moscow, 1967; S. I. Yakubovskaya, *The Building of a Federal Soviet Socialist State (1921-1925)*, Moscow, 1960; S. S. Gilirov, *V. I. Lenin: Organiser of the Soviet Multinational State*, Moscow, 1960 (all in Russian).

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION. BEGINNING OF THE ROAD

Lenin began his political and theoretical activity when the first revolutionary tremors, harbingers of the earthquakes of 1905 and 1917, were already rolling across Russia. Discontent with tsarism, with its adventurist policy, obstinate conservatism, stupidity and glaring social injustice gripped fairly large sections of the population. But this discontent was still lacking in perspective. Workers' strikes, peasant revolts and student unrest had little effect both because they were infrequent and did not involve broad masses and because they pursued relatively narrow, immediate aims and did not promote fundamental problems of the country's development; these wellsprings were still to merge into a mighty torrent of the revolutionary movement.

Such was the practical political situation. As regards theory, the most popular were two outwardly opposing conceptions of social progress, both of which, however, as time showed, would lead the country into a blind alley. It is necessary to say a few words about them if only because they have outlived themselves and their remnants now and again come up to the surface. The proponents

of the first conception placed their hopes on archaic, typically Russian institutions and way of life believing that by relying on them Russia, after overthrowing the autocracy, would be able to by-pass capitalism and build a just social system. In their opinion the peasantry was the main force which could have ensured progressive transformations. They ignored its cultural backwardness, stratification and erosion and refused to admit that the future was being born in the town with its industry and working class all of which they hated. This conception is characterised by a non-historic, reactionary-utopian approach to the social institutions and social structure and by the desire to dissociate the future of Russia from the highroad of world social development. Founded by Slavophiles, this conception found its fullest expression in Liberal Narodism.¹

The adherents of the other conception which took shape in the 1890s regarded specific Russian reality as a concrete national embodiment of the general laws of social development. They believed, however, that owing to her backwardness Russia was destined to move in the wake of the more advanced countries, copying their road of development. They based their plans in the social field on efficiency and rationality, the embodiment of which in their opinion was the bourgeoisie or the bourgeois intelligentsia. For all its outward support for progress,

¹ Narodism is a Russian revolutionary trend which took shape in the latter half of the 19th century. Narodniks wanted to overthrow the tsarist autocracy and set up a republic. The extreme Left wing of the revolutionary Narodniks waged a political struggle by various methods, including terror. In 1881 they killed Alexander II. The slogan of another part of Left-wing Narodniks was "Go among the people", chiefly among the peasants, to enlighten them and rally them for the struggle. There was also Liberal Narodism which advocated reforms. Narodniks set up disciplined clandestine organisations whose experience was used by 20th-century revolutionaries. In the beginning of the 20th century Narodniks were succeeded by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party (SRs).

this conception was characterised by mistrust in the advanced forces of the people as a source of progress, and by a steadily increasing fear of revolution as the embodiment of this progress. At first this conception was upheld by "legal Marxists" and then by the Constitutional-Democrats (Cadets) and Mensheviks representing the Right, openly bourgeois, and the Left, quasi-socialist, wings of the bourgeois intelligentsia.¹

Characteristically, Pyotr Struve, ideologue of the "legal Marxists", who urged that "we acknowledge our lack of culture and go to capitalism for schooling", shortly became a prominent figure in the Cadet Party, while some other "legal Marxists" sided with the Mensheviks. But all of them advocated careful changes among the upper sections of society. It is characteristic, on the other hand, that the epigones of Narodism also adopted the line of propagandising reforms.

So, two extremes came together on the basis of reformism and, in the final analysis, of counter-revolution,

¹ The Constitutional-Democratic Party (Cadets) was set up in 1905 during the first Russian revolution and initially relied chiefly on bourgeois intellectuals. In 1917 it became a bulwark of the bourgeois counter-revolution and planned to establish a constitutional monarchy according to the English pattern.

The Menshevik Party appeared in 1903 as a result of the split of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP which was established in 1898) into Leninist Bolsheviks and reformist Mensheviks.

They relied mainly on the more well-to-do sections of the workers (printers, for example) and the lower and middle segments of the intelligentsia. By 1917 it had split up into several groups. Its Right wing was headed by Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918), a prominent Marxist theoretician and the first populariser of Marxist ideas in Russia, who during the last years of his life went over to social-chauvinist positions. Among the leaders of the Left wing, one of the most renowned figures was Yuli Martov (1873-1923) who together with Lenin edited the *Iskra*, the first newspaper of the RSDLP. After the split of the Party in 1903 he headed the Menshevik faction.

although initially both of them, each in its own way, claimed to be revolutionary. Only Lenin and his associates, who subsequently united in the Bolshevik Party, were genuine revolutionaries. They based their assessment of the situation and prospects for the future on Marx's laws of social development, but had no intention of passively following them and drew their strength from the awakened people of Russia, from the emergent revolutionary wellsprings.

Among the then Social-Democratic parties, the Bolshevik Party was distinguished by its ability actively and creatively to apply the general premises of Marxist theory in the specific conditions of the country. Drawing on the international experience of the socialist and working-class movement, Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not want Russia to play the role of a blind person who simply follows his guide, but decided that she should make her own independent contribution, which proved to be very substantial, to this experience. This course was in keeping with Marx's and Engels' brilliant conclusions that "Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe", and that "the Russian Revolution" was becoming "the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West".¹

Thanks to his creative approach to Marxist theory Lenin correctly analysed the fundamental changes in the nature of world social development and discovered that Marx's and Engels' earlier conclusion about the necessarily world-wide character of socialist revolution and that "it will take place in all civilised countries ... simultaneously"² had to be seriously amended.

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1973, p. 100.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE WORLD REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Lenin's first major work *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* was written for this purpose. It ended with the prophetic words: "When its (the working class'—Y.A.) advanced representatives have mastered the ideas of scientific socialism, the idea of the historical role of the Russian worker, when these ideas become widespread, and when stable organisations are formed among the workers to transform the workers' present sporadic economic war into conscious class struggle—then the Russian WORKER, rising at the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the RUSSIAN PROLETARIAT (side by side with the proletariat of ALL COUNTRIES) along the straight road of open political struggle to THE VICTORIOUS COMMUNIST REVOLUTION."¹ It is important to note, first, his strictly revolutionary and, consequently, anti-reformist orientation; second, the idea of continuity of the Russian revolution and its prompt shift from the anti-monarchistic, bourgeois-democratic stage to the anti-bourgeois, socialist stage; third, the interpretation of the Russian revolutionary movement as an element of the world revolution, and not as a secondary element but as an extremely important one stimulating the entire world process; fourth, the idea about the leading role of the working class throughout the revolution, beginning with its bourgeois-democratic stage; fifth, the key role played by the "stable organisations" of the proletariat, by its party. Although in 1894 these thoughts were formulated in only general terms they determined the substance and the distinctive features of the emergent Leninist phase in the development of Marxism.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 300.

Five years later in an article for the *Rabochaya Gazeta* which the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party at its First Congress (1898) recognised as its official organ, Lenin painted an optimistic perspective of the class struggle of the proletariat of Russia. "Russian Social-Democracy," he concluded, "will place itself at the head of all fighters for the rights of the people, of all fighters for democracy, and it will prove invincible."¹ Here Lenin not only re-emphasises the singular importance of the revolutionary struggle in Russia, but also formulates the idea about the need for extensive class alliances of the proletariat and the Party's reliance on all the advanced forces of the people.

In his book *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), in which he substantiated and developed a detailed plan for the establishment of a revolutionary party as the leading and organising force of the working-class movement, Lenin defined the place and role of the Russian revolution in the world revolutionary process: "History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is the most revolutionary of all the immediate tasks confronting the proletariat of any country. The fulfilment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat."² It is clear that approaching this question from internationalist positions as Marx and Engels did, Lenin further extended it, envisaging that the imminent revolution of 1905 would have a decisive impact on developments in Asia as well as in Europe.

At the same time he was resolutely against regarding the Russian revolution as a secondary, auxiliary force for the proletariat of the more advanced countries. When

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 214.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 373.

G. V. Plekhanov offered the Party a draft programme drawn up in this vein, Lenin subjected it to sharp criticism: "The programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Party should begin with a definition (and indictment) of Russian capitalism—and only then stress the international character of the movement, which in form—to use the words of the *Communist Manifesto*—is of necessity at first a national struggle."¹

Though Lenin did not question the universal nature of the approaching revolution, he was aware to a much greater extent than anyone else that the forms and prospects of the revolutionary process in various countries depended enormously on the difference in the level and specificity of their economic and social development. Being an unsurpassed authority on Russian reality he knew that its complexity and multiformity and the fact that it was characterised by the existence of various social and economic structures would make themselves felt in the future and engender an unpredictable diversity of forms of revolutionary activity. Already in those years he had a feeling that there would be some unexpected and unique revolutionary and post-revolutionary situations which could run counter to the orientation that capitalism would be overturned in the advanced countries at one and the same time. This orientation stemmed from Marx and Engels who believed that socialist revolution could be victorious only if it spread beyond the boundaries of one or another country and only by winning "the European terrain, on which alone the social revolution of the nineteenth century can be accomplished."² This temporal restriction could not have been more expedient, since the law of the uneven development of capitalism had never made itself felt with such force as in the twentieth century. Taking this circumstance into account Lenin

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 37.

² K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 227.

subsequently arrived at a political conclusion of the utmost importance for the revolutionary movement, namely, that socialism could win in one country.

During the December armed insurrection (1905) Lenin viewed the Russian revolution only as being dependent on the European revolution, as its inalienable part. This view was axiomatic with the Social-Democrats. "This struggle," he wrote in those days, "would have been almost hopeless for the Russian proletariat alone ... *had the European socialist proletariat* not come to the assistance of the Russian proletariat. ...

"The Russian proletariat *plus* the European proletariat organise revolution."¹

But Lenin did not feel himself fettered by this formula. One gets the impression that he merely stated it as something that goes without saying in order to concentrate all his efforts on solving concrete problems of the *Russian* revolution. He focussed his analytical mind on examining the potential factors of the revolution in Russia. And without precluding defeats he anticipated the ultimate victory of the working class on Russian territory. He went even further: "Only such a victory will put a real weapon into the hands of the proletariat—and then we shall set Europe ablaze, so as to make the Russian democratic revolution the prologue to a European socialist revolution."²

Here the traditional manner of thinking is overturned; assistance from foreign countries is no longer regarded as a precondition for the victory of the revolution in Russia, but, on the contrary, the latter is viewed as a precondition for a revolution in the whole of Europe. In this way the Russian revolution is not a derivative of movements in other countries, but a paramount motive force of world history. The international significance of the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 92.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 412.

Russian revolution acquires a much deeper meaning and accordingly the prospects of the world revolutionary movement become more favourable. "The overthrow of tsarism in Russia, so valiantly begun by our working class," Lenin wrote, "will be the turning-point in the history of all countries; it will facilitate the task of the workers of all nations, in all states, in all parts of the globe."¹

In the course of the first Russian revolution and after it Lenin determined the fighting ability and designated the tasks of the working class and its Party without, however, considering the desirable but by no means guaranteed assistance from abroad. Moreover, he thoroughly studied the possibility of a correct development of the revolution in Russia even in the absence of a socialist revolution in the West.² In those days this thought was heresy in the eyes of Social-Democracy, but one which was confirmed by the entire subsequent course of developments.

This appraisal of the Russian revolution as an independent value—and only this can predicate its international relevance—was typical of Lenin, in contrast to, say, Plekhanov whose Europocentric approach to Russian problems, which he invariably regarded as derivatives of developments abroad, prevented him from concentrating on their study, perceiving their specific features and anticipating the winding paths leading to their solution. But Lenin keenly sensed the uniqueness of Russian reality; he enjoyed immersing himself in it and searching for those original ways out of the emergent situations which could not be promoted in general schemes. Lenin's thorough elaboration of the tactics and strategy of the *Russian* revolution enabled him to develop into a theoretician of the *world* revolution.

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 100.

² See *ibid.*, Vol. 13, p. 327.

That was how he reached the historic conclusion about the possibility of socialism winning first in a few and even in one capitalist country. Lenin formulated it in 1915 in an article entitled "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe";¹ and although he did not mention Russia directly, judging by its context and works connected with it it was clear that he had her in mind in the first place. Now the stake on the Russian revolution not only reflected Lenin's complete absorption with Russian reality alone; it was also a result of the disappointment caused among the true revolutionaries by the chauvinistic fall of West European Social-Democracy in connection with the outbreak of the First World War. But this fall also mirrored the corresponding level of political consciousness of the West European working class. At the time Rosa Luxemburg spoke with bitterness about the absence of revolutionary consciousness among the German proletariat, then considered to be in the lead. This admission, made by a person for whom Lenin had the highest respect, could only strengthen his conviction that his orientation on revolution in Russia was correct.

At no time did Lenin's disenchantment with the possibilities of the West European working-class movement turn into political pessimism which was inherent in many political emigrants at different times. On the contrary, even in exile he retained his profound revolutionary optimism which was manifested in his articles and letters of the period. Having discovered, in spite of the depressing situation engendered by militaristic hysteria and social-betrayal, that there were favourable opportunities for the development of the revolutionary movement in his native land, Lenin simultaneously realised the consequences this fact might bring about for Europe if not for the world as a whole. "After expropriating the capitalists and organising their own socialist production," Lenin

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 341.

wrote, "the victorious proletariat of that country (read: Russia.—Y.A.) will arise *against* the rest of the world—the capitalist world—attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, stirring uprisings in those countries against the capitalists, and in case of need using even armed force against the exploiting classes and their states."¹

And so, while conceding that for a certain period Russia would be the sole country of the victorious revolution, Lenin was sure that the Russian spark would set off a conflagration in other countries. At the same time he noted the possibility—for the first time in such a definite form—of the victory of not only the first, bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution, but also of the second, socialist stage, in only one country. Russia, he held, could shortly become that country. These facts expose the frank dishonesty of Western Sovietologists who, endeavouring to belittle Lenin's contribution to the development of the revolutionary theory, maintain that allegedly right up to 1917 Lenin "was convinced that only a bourgeois revolution, which would firmly establish capitalism without which a proletarian revolution was inconceivable, could take place in Russia".²

Mensheviks and Right-wing Social-Democrats abroad and other proponents of the Western path of development claimed that a precondition for socialism was a long period of "purely" bourgeois development. But then the February and the October revolutions of 1917 in Russia should have been divided by a period of several decades, while in actual fact this period covered only a few months. Angered by the October Revolution which did not fit the quasi-Marxist pedantic schemes, their ideologue Kautsky wrote: "Whenever capitalist production

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 342.

² Nikolaus Iobkowitz, "Warum eine Revolution? Von Marx bis Trotzki", in *Permanente Revolution von Marx bis Marcuse*, München, 1969, S. 22.

cannot immediately turn into socialist production, the former should remain in force, otherwise the production process will be interrupted...." Further on, with reference to the Bolsheviks, he said: "Their dictatorship contradicted Marx's tenet that not a single nation can jump over a natural phase of development or abolish it by decrees."¹

In just the same way the Mensheviks even after the October Revolution asserted in their draft resolution submitted to the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets (January 1918) that "any attempt at a socialist coup in Russia prior to the beginning of a socialist revolution in the West is doomed to failure."² And it was to these scholastic pseudo-Marxists that Lenin subsequently replied: "You say that civilisation is necessary for the building of socialism.... But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilisation in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards socialism?... Our European philistines never even dream that the subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries, which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions, will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than the Russian revolution."³ Clearly, it was Lenin who had the Marxist creative view of history, and today, too, history proves the correctness of this approach.

As soon as news of the February Revolution reached foreign countries, Lenin, who was in exile in Switzerland at the time, promptly grasped the essence of the events and in his letters to the Party—known as *Letters from Afar*—set the task: "...to find the surest road to the next

¹ Karl Kautsky, *Die Diktatur des Proletariats*, Wien, 1918, SS. 41, 607.

² See V. I. Lenin on the Historic Experience of the Great October Revolution, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1970, pp. 227-28 (in Russian).

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 450.

stage of the revolution or to the second revolution, which must transfer political power from the government of the landlords and capitalists (the Guchkovs, Lvovs, Milyukovs, Kerenskys) to a government of the workers and poorest peasants" and predicted that this objective, the victory of the proletariat, could be attained "in the very near future".¹ Nevertheless, there were some Bolsheviks, who considered that Russia had not yet matured for a socialist revolution and that Lenin who was far away from Russia had been unable to understand the events. The future showed, however, that it was Lenin who had been right. In his famous speech made from an armoured car at the Finlandsky Station upon returning to Petrograd he proclaimed the slogan: "Long live the socialist revolution!" and on the following day included it in his *April Theses*, a programme for the further development of the revolution. This programme was adopted by the Party and carried out by the October Revolution.

CONTRADICTIONS WHICH RESULTED IN REVOLUTION

The monarchy in Russia collapsed on February 27 (March 12, according to the Gregorian calendar) 1917, as a result of the uprising of the working people in Petrograd and other cities. Power passed into the hands of a Provisional Government made up chiefly of representatives of bourgeois parties, among whom the Constitutional-Democrats (Cadets) were the most influential, and later augmented by representatives of petty-bourgeois parties—Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries.² It existed until October 25 (November 7) when it was deposed by

¹ Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 340.

² Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs)—members of a party which emerged in 1902 following the merger of Narodnik groups some of which stood on terroristic positions. It relied mainly on the peasantry. In 1917, as a result of the stratification of the village and the development of the revolution, the party split up into a Right

another armed uprising of workers and soldiers who this time took power into their own hands. The eight months which separated the bourgeois-democratic February Revolution and the proletarian, socialist October Revolution were marked by interminable arguments over new Russia's path of development: whether the revolution should be continued, or whether the country should go along the path of "normal" evolutionary development after the Western pattern of the time.

Mensheviks and other reformists reasoned that Russia was not yet ripe for socialism, that her economic system was extremely underdeveloped and her cultural level was much too low. These ideas still nourish the minds of a considerable portion of modern Sovietologists.

Lenin did not deny that Russia was a backward country. Some 74 per cent of her population between 9 and 45 years of age were illiterate and she had the highest death rate (30.5 per cent) among European countries. The survivals of her feudal and even pre-feudal past were in evidence, particularly in the countryside, in relations of production and in social psychology.

Lenin, however, resolutely rejected the fatalistic interpretation of Russia's backwardness. Backwardness exacerbated all the contradictions of Russia's reality to the extreme making her dependence on her Western allies in the First World War exceptionally humiliating, hunger exceptionally unbearable and the parasitic and corrupt "upper" strata especially loathsome to the indigent masses of the proletariat. The October Revolution showed and subsequent developments in other countries confirmed that revolutions spring not so much from a certain level of economic development as from the maximum aggravation of social contradictions which, taken together, pro-

duce what Marxists call a revolutionary situation, in which the lower strata do not want to live in the old way, while the upper strata can no longer rule in the old way. Such a situation can arise in a developed capitalist country where the economic preconditions of socialism have matured, and in a country with a medium level of capitalist development, and, given certain conditions, in an economically backward country.

The Russian people who had consummated the revolution had to make superhuman efforts to surmount their country's backwardness. But in the October Revolution it was backwardness which brought the country out of the political crisis. "Our backwardness has pushed us forward, ..." Lenin wrote.¹

Of exceptional interest in this context is Lenin's polemic with the Mensheviks, proponents of the first of the two anti-Leninist conceptions of social progress mentioned above. The most authoritative Menshevik ideologue, Plekhanov, regarded Russia's backwardness only as an impediment to her development. He wrote, for instance: "The explosion of 1905-1906 resulted from the Europeanisation of Russia. And its 'failure' was due to the fact that the process of Europeanisation has so far affected by far not the *whole* of Russia."² Lenin by no means negated the significance of "Europeanisation". He saw it in the development of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and also in the growth of the political power and importance of the working class stressing the latter's vanguard role in the first Russian revolution. But he went further than that. In the semi-serf bondage of the broad, chiefly peasant, masses of the country he discerned a wellspring of acute social tension which had imparted special force to the Russian revolution.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 232.

² G. V. Plekhanov, *The History of Russian Social Thought*, Book One, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, p. 114 (in Russian).

In 1913, in a polemic with the Menshevik historian I. A. Rozhkov who denied that a revolutionary crisis of the 1905 type could ever appear again because, in his opinion, capitalist relations had already been established in Russia, Lenin referred to such indicators of Russia's backwardness as hunger, the degraded social status of the countryside, serfdom-like practices in the field of law, and arrived at the conclusion that "the *bourgeois-democratic* crisis has become still more acute".¹

In other words, the Russian revolution developed such immense internal energy and proved to be so uncompromising and far-reaching as a result of the fact that it unfolded in a country with highly contradictory structures. Lenin sensed this quality in it from the very beginning. In his time Menshevik Y. Larin attributed the spontaneity of the Russian revolutionary movement *solely* to its weakness, and gave preference to the balanced nature of the movement in Western Europe, which kept within reformist limits. Lenin was strongly opposed to this explanation.² Elsewhere, characterising the features of the revolutionary movement in Russia, Lenin along with the consciousness of the socialist proletariat mentioned such a factor as "the extreme revolutionary spirit of the muzhik, driven by the age-old yoke of the feudal-minded landlords to a state of utter desperation and to the demand for confiscations of the landed estates..."³

The ignorance and misery of the popular masses, "total lawlessness in Russian life", were deposited in a naïve devotion to tsarism on the part of the urban and rural lower strata, and in the peasants' hostile neutrality with which the Narodniks met in their "going among the people".

At the same time the seemingly negative social and cultural features of Russia sharply aggravated other

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 489.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 349-51.

³ Ibid., Vol. 15, p. 52.

social contradictions and widened the scope of the mass revolutionary movement.

On the other hand, advanced bourgeois countries to this day now and again become scenes of actions by social groups which are being washed away by the contemporary capitalist development: small farmers and peasants protesting against the fall of purchasing prices on farm products, shopkeepers succumbing in their competition with large department stores, and so on. But the Communist parties do not haughtily reject these actions as "reactionary". On the contrary, they endeavour to channel them into the mainstream of struggle waged by the anti-monopoly coalition. Lenin wrote referring to the Russian revolution: "To become great, to evoke 1783-93, not 1848-50, and to surpass those years, it must rouse the vast masses to active life, to heroic efforts, to 'fundamental historic creativeness', it must raise them out of frightful ignorance, unparalleled oppression, incredible backwardness, and abysmal dullness."¹ Inevitably, emancipation from this backwardness and dullness at times acquired odd, grotesque forms. But these forms embodied the passionate energy of the masses. Characteristically, Lenin ties in "Asiatic barbarism", which aroused especially vehement protests, with the broad scope of the revolutionary movement which, while developing under the slogan of "human", cultural life, "...unites all classes, vastly outgrows all party bounds and shakes up people who as yet are very very far from being able to rise to party allegiance".²

These thoughts of Lenin's have become the subject of particular attention in recent years when it has become necessary for Marxists to explain the unprecedented role which the Third World now plays in the international revolutionary movement and to ascertain the distribution

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 291.

² Ibid., Vol. 10, p. 77.

of light and shadows in this movement, and, casting off both naïve illusions and stagnant skepticism, discover the reasons for the popularity of such essentially utopian ideologists, who nevertheless reflect the thoughts and aspirations of the broad masses, as Mahatma Gandhi, Frantz Fanon and Martin Luther King.

Thus, misery sets the stage for change. But this "misery" in Russia did not necessarily bring about positive changes alone; it exacted its toll after the revolution, when it became necessary to deal with the all-pervading, typically Russian backwardness which, given Russia's "classical" development, would have been overcome in the course of a no less "classical" bourgeois revolution.

Lenin, however, did not absolutise Russia's backwardness. Taking note of its significance as a catalyst, he regarded Russia as a country with an average level of capitalist development. Characterising the Russian economy, he wrote: "...the most backward system of landownership and the most ignorant peasantry on the one hand, and the most advanced industrial and finance capitalism in the world."¹ As regards the level of concentration of industry and the size of industrial enterprises, the most advanced industrial areas of pre-revolutionary Russia (St. Petersburg, Moscow, the Urals and the Donbas) fully compared with major European industrial complexes. The extent of monopolisation and state intervention in the economy (to promote the interests of the ruling classes, of course), that is to say, the level of development of state-monopoly capitalism, i.e., the structure that is in fact the economic threshold of socialism, was the same, if not greater, than in the most advanced Western countries.

All these facts disclose the utter untenability of the favourite thesis of the quasi-Marxist critics of Bolshevism who claim that Lenin, allegedly in contrast to Marx's

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 442.

economic determinism, approached the problem of revolution from purely voluntaristic positions, without taking into account whether there were any objective economic prerequisites for it. At this point note should be taken of another aberration displayed by many foreign commentators on the Russian revolution. Referring to the fact that the peasantry constituted the bulk of the population of Russia they say that the October Revolution was not a proletarian but a peasant revolution.⁴ From this false thesis logically springs another thesis just as false but politically much more acute—that the experience of the October Revolution can be applied only to archaic societies, or at best to the contemporary Third World, or only to the past.² Accordingly, Lenin's elaboration of Marxism is interpreted as a sort of "dialectics of backwardness".³ The revolution is thus equated with all the other forms of surmounting backwardness and as a result disappears altogether as such.

This fallacy is designed to obliterate the international significance of the October Revolution, to cloak the universal significance of Lenin's plan of revolution and the building of socialism in Russia.

The universal significance of this plan is connected with the fact that Leninism appeared on the basis of a scientific analysis of Russia's internal antagonisms which

⁴ See, for example: Maurice Hindus, *House Without Roof*, New York, 1961, p. 275.

² This thesis is presented in greater detail by the American-German historian von Laue who regards the October Revolution as "peculiarly Russian phenomenon, in the tradition of Peter the Great, relevant only to countries on the fringes of European civilisation" (T. von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin? A Reappraisal of the Russian Revolution*, Philadelphia-New York, 1964, p. 224).

³ Columbia University Professor Alfred Mayer who ascribed this "doctrine" to Lenin groundlessly asserts that according to Leninism backwardness is the main factor of change (A. Mayer, *Leninism*, Cambridge, 1957).

even in their specific national form mirrored all the basic contradictions of the modern world. Lenin, therefore, had every reason to note: "... all the primary features of our revolution, and many of its secondary features, are of international significance in the meaning of its effect on all countries."¹ That is why as he developed the Marxist theory of revolution he did not confine himself to generalising the Russian experience, but also took into account the experience of the revolutionary movement in other countries, a fact which also reflects Leninism's international character.

The above fallacy rested, in particular, on a perverted idea of the proletariat in pre-revolutionary Russia. The German Social-Democratic journal *Neue Zeit* wrote in 1919 that Russia at the time had not more than four million hired workers and that all told there were only eight million proletarians in the country.² In actual fact, the Russian working class was relatively numerous and highly developed. Soviet historian Y. Polyakov, having generalised various calculations, came to the conclusion that the Russian proletariat totalled 23-24 million people

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 21.

² It is strange indeed that such a perversion of the actual state of affairs from the "right" has been taken up by some Left commentators. French Left-wing sociologists F. Bon and M.-A. Burnier assert that on the eve of the revolution Russia allegedly had three million proletarians or 1.8 per cent of her population of 174 million (Frédéric Bon, Michel-Antoine Burnier, *Classe ouvrière et révolution*, Paris, 1971, p. 66). It is impossible to understand their calculations because at that time Russia had a population of some 140 million.

A series of anti-communist articles carried by *The New York Times* in connection with the 125th anniversary of the publication of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* were written in a similar vein. In one of them Milovan Djilas claimed that the victorious revolutions in the USSR and other East European countries were proletarian only in the ideological, and not in the social respect, because the working class in these countries was allegedly too small. (See *The New York Times*, August 8, 1972.)

(including family members), or 16.7-17 per cent of the country's population, while without office workers it amounted to 20.6 million people (14.8 per cent).¹ At the same time, it should not be overlooked that the process of proletarianisation in Russia embraced not only the town but also the countryside with its predominantly poor, proletarian and semi-proletarian radically-minded strata.

The Russian proletariat was distinguished by a high degree of concentration. For each large industrial enterprise (with more than 500 workers) there were on average 1,400 workers in Russia compared with 1,100 in the USA and 900 in Germany. In St. Petersburg alone large-scale industry employed 400 thousand workers, and the figure for Moscow was 300 thousand. All in all, 64 per cent of factory workers were concentrated in the St. Petersburg and the Central Industrial regions. The concentration of forces in the decisive sectors of the struggle in no small measure predetermined the swift success of the October armed uprising.

Thus, objective conditions for a socialist revolution existed in Russia, but they were supplemented by extremely important subjective factors. It proved relatively easy to seize power in the first place because the proletariat of Russia had bigger revolutionary potentialities than that of any other country, because it wielded enormous political influence in the country and had vast experience of class struggle in all its forms (from peaceful and legal to underground activity and armed uprising), and also because the workers' aristocracy in Russia was weak and undeveloped.

The bulk of the proletariat supported the Bolsheviks. Indicative in this respect were the elections to the Constituent Assembly which were scheduled by the Provisional

¹ Y. Polyakov, *Change in the USSR Social Structure*, Moscow, 1970, pp. 2-3 (in Russian).

Government and conducted after its overthrow in November 1917. At these elections the Bolsheviks won the largest number of votes in 67 gubernia towns; in Petrograd they received 45.3 and in Moscow 50.1 per cent of the votes. At the main fronts of the army in the field the Bolsheviks won an absolute majority of the votes. This showed that the revolutionary troops supported the insurgent proletariat. Analysing these results Lenin confidently concluded that the Bolsheviks "already had a *political striking force*" by November 1917, which ensured them an overwhelming superiority of forces at the decisive point at the decisive moment".¹

Even the well-known Sovietologist Isaac Deutscher, who by no means can be suspected of sympathising with the Soviet Union, acknowledged that "no class in Russian society, and no working class anywhere in the world, has ever acted with the energy, the political intelligence, the ability for organisation, and the heroism with which the Russian workers acted in 1917 (and thereafter in the civil war)".²

It is clear from his works that Lenin stressed the significance of the subjective factor and never interpreted it voluntaristically, contrary to the assertions of Sidney Hook, Alfred Mayer, Adam Ulam, Raymond Aron, Robert Daniels and some other Western Sovietologists. Revolutions, Lenin wrote, "cannot be made to order, or by agreement; they break out when tens of millions of people come to the conclusion that it is impossible to live in the old way any longer".³ Taking these words into account it is impossible to characterise as Lenin's followers those, evidently sincere, ultra-Left revolutionaries who want to impose revolution on a people against its will.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 262.

² Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution. Russia 1917-1967*, London, 1967, p. 24.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 480.

The revolutionary qualities of Russia's working class alongside the acuteness of social contradictions compensated, as it were, the inadequacy of economic prerequisites for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The October Revolution proved to be a serious argument overturning the pseudo-Marxist single-value interpretation of the dependence of political development on the economic basis.

Rebuffing the economic determinism of Right-wing Social-Democrats Engels underlined: "According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life*. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: institutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophic theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form."¹

Lenin attached great importance to this thought of the founders of Marxism when he talked, for instance, about the stimulating significance for the revolution of such antagonisms in Russia's superstructure as the struggle against feudal practices in the field of law. The Mensheviks, for their part, however, took advantage of Russia's alleged immaturity for revolution to justify their inactivity. At the same time they accused Lenin of fatal-

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 487.

ism, Blanquism, anarchism and other sins. And today, too, there are Sovietologists who do the same. One of them, Englishman John Keep, for example, alleges that Lenin placed all hope on the "unpredictable subjective or chance element"¹ thus coming into conflict with Marx's determinism.

This assertion is totally erroneous, for Lenin, who had thoroughly studied the economic prerequisites for political development noted the connection between them and the subjective element and underlined the significance of the purposeful revolutionary activity of the masses and their leaders. It can be said that by doing so he returned to Marxism, which had been perverted by the opportunists, its active and effective substance set forth in Marx's famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."² Lenin was a true Marxist, for in guiding the revolutionary activity of the Party which he had founded he took into account the actual antagonisms of Russia's social life.

The acuteness of these contradictions predetermines the answer to the question ever present in the minds of Western Sovietologists—was the October Revolution a historical inevitability. Many of them strive to prove that only a favourable concurrence of circumstances enabled the Bolsheviks to consummate the revolution. The political purport of the theory of the "chance element" is to nullify the significance of the experience of the October Revolution for other countries. In its extreme expression this theory is present in the works of US Professor Robert V. Daniels who regards the Bolshevik victory as an absolutely irrational event which was "little short of a historical miracle"³. Clearly, Daniels continues in the traditions of those historians who connect the establish-

¹ *Lenin: the Man, the Theorist, the Leader*, p. 146.

² K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

³ *The Russian Review*, October 1967, p. 340.

ment of the Roman Empire with the shape of Cleopatra's nose and Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo with his cold in the head.

In actual fact the situation in Russia was such that nothing could have averted the explosion, for not one of the main classes was satisfied with the existing state of affairs: the toiling classes wanted an end to the war, the peasants wanted land, workers wanted their material status improved and to do away with the hated capitalist masters. On the other hand, the landowners and the bourgeoisie could not reconcile themselves with the state of unrest in the country and hoped for the re-establishment of "law and order". But if the landowners and the nobility had forfeited mass support, if the indecisive bourgeoisie marked time in politics and if the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia servilely plodded in the wake of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat proved to be a truly active, purposeful and energetic class.

W. N. Chamberlin, an American who has written a work about the 1917 revolution in Russia, in his articles in the Sovietological journal *The Russian Review*, reasons in terms of what would have happened, if ... (if, for instance, the Provisional Government would have been headed by a more resolute man, if a radical agrarian reform had been carried out, and so forth). But the "errors" of Kerensky and his associates did not so much reflect their utter political incompetence as this incompetence mirrored the true face of the Russian bourgeoisie. It simply was incapable of having other, more imaginative leaders, and another policy, for the latter was socially conditioned. In the light of the above the Russian proletariat objectively merited its victory. The militant mood of the working masses demonstrated their complete loss of faith in the evolutionary, reformist path of development and their confidence that only a revolution could resolve the nationwide problems of peace, land, hunger and economic dislocation.

Lately historians who regard the Soviet epoch as a deviation from the Western "democratic" path of development have taken to contraposing the February Revolution, which overturned the monarchy, to the October Revolution. They reason approximately along the following lines: the Russian people would only have had to wait for a "legal" decision by "legal" bodies of all acute problems; they were free after all. There is no denying the historic significance of the February Revolution which did actually turn Russia into the freest of all bourgeois states at the time. But the distinguishing feature of revolutionary storms is that they cannot be stopped by subjective will; they develop in conformity with the aspirations of the struggling classes and not with the good wishes of detached observers. The Russian people had no time to wait, they could not be satisfied with the February Revolution, for it changed the form of political authority and not its class substance while they needed a revolution which would radically re-organise the whole country and all social relations from top to bottom. The October Revolution did all that.

Incidentally, there are some anti-communist historians who as soon as they depart from their customary biased positions are compelled to acknowledge that the October Revolution had been predetermined by history. "If the Provisional Government had been able to withdraw from the war and carry through a land settlement satisfactory to the peasantry, it is highly doubtful that the Bolsheviks could have gathered enough support to stage a successful coup d'état," writes the American Merle Fainsod, and then adds: "Yet to state this alternative, so plausibly reinforced by hindsight, is to miss the tragic imperatives of 1917."¹ Fainsod's further reasonings confirm that none other but the Bolshevik Party could have satisfied the aspirations of the revolutionary people.

¹ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1963, p. 85.

The October Revolution was carried out at a time when the upsurge of the revolutionary forces was at its height.

It was Lenin, who combined an excellent knowledge of Russia with phenomenal political intuition, with the ability correctly to assess the correlation of political forces at various periods of the revolutionary process, who chose just the right time for the uprising to begin. On the day of the uprising he wrote: "To delay action is fatal."¹ It could have happened that if the uprising had not taken place, the revolutionary upsurge, which had already lasted for a considerable period, could have subsided. Endowed with the courage of a true politician, Lenin sensed the strength and the possibilities inherent in Russia's revolutionary mood and grasped the objective implications of the events. This was not easy to do, for some of his associates in the Party leadership were against the uprising; overestimating the enemy and underestimating the strength of the proletariat they considered that the risk of the uprising would be excessive. Just a few days before the October Revolution N. I. Podvoisky, one of the Bolsheviks placed in charge of the military side of the uprising, tried to persuade Lenin to postpone it for ten or fifteen days. But Lenin made every effort to change the mood of the vacillating members of the Central Committee and the plan of the uprising was put into effect. This came about because Lenin relied on the mass of Party members who, like the revolutionary workers, supported him in his demand to begin the uprising, and also thanks to his determination as a politician and ability to sweep aside inopportune vacillations. On the eve of the revolution Lenin who considered Danton "the greatest master of revolutionary policy yet known" frequently repeated his words: "*de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace!*"²

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 235.

² *Ibid.*, p. 180.

These words fully conveyed the essence of Lenin's political behaviour. Of course, circumstances were favourable for revolution in October 1917, and it was thanks to Lenin and his Party that full use was made of this lucky chance. But it was in this chance that the historical inevitability of the revolution manifested itself.

CONTINUITY OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE PEASANT QUESTION

Immediately after the upsurge of the struggle of the West European proletariat in 1848 and 1849 Marx and Engels advanced the slogan "Revolution in Permanence".¹ But the German Social-Democracy which monopolised their heritage buried this slogan in oblivion and absolutised the well-known typology of revolutions which classified them into bourgeois-democratic and socialist. In practice this absolutisation turned into a Chinese wall dividing a single, continuous revolutionary process and inhibiting its development. It was Lenin and his Party who demolished this wall.

The adherents of the Menshevik conception of revolution maintained that the overthrow of tsarism would be followed by a long period of "purely" capitalist development, that, as A. Martynov, a well-known ideologue of Economism² and later a Menshevik, put it, the bourgeoisie would "inevitably dominate liberated Russia".³ In contrast to them, Lenin, who from the beginning of his

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 185.

² Economism was an ideological trend in Russian Social-Democracy at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The Economists considered it essential and useful for the working class to participate only in the economic struggle and gave complete control over the political struggle to the bourgeoisie.

³ *Second Congress of the RSDLP. Protocols*, Moscow, 1959, p. 251 (in Russian).

activity upheld the idea of continuity of revolution, at the first signs of the revolutionary storms of 1905 polemically noted: "Strictly differentiating between stages that are essentially different, soberly examining the conditions under which they manifest themselves, does not at all mean indefinitely postponing one's ultimate aim, or slowing down one's progress in advance."¹ In his programme work *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in a Democratic Revolution* he disclosed and substantiated the possibility of pushing the bourgeoisie away from leadership of the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution and achieving already at this stage the hegemony of the proletariat thanks to its alliance with non-proletarian masses, the peasantry above all.

Continuing his polemic with Martynov Lenin wrote: "The complete revolution means seizure of power by the proletariat and the poor peasantry. *These classes*, once in power, cannot but strive for socialist revolution. Ergo, seizure of power, from being a first step in the democratic revolution, will, by force of circumstance, and against the will (and sometimes without the awareness) of its participants pass into the socialist revolution."²

This and many other similar views expressed by Lenin showed that he regarded the transition of the revolution to the achievement of socialist aims as a result of the re-education and activity of the masses, and not as a purely "wilful" act by the Party. That was why in the first months between the February and October revolutions he warned against premature attempts to seize power without being assured of the support of the proletariat and the people, and began to hasten the seizure of power as soon as the majority of the people went over to the side of the revolutionary proletariat. He repeatedly mentioned this shift as being just about the most important argu-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 258-59.

ment in support of his demand immediately to begin an armed uprising against the Provisional Government.

Back, in the period of the first Russian revolution, he made the following point: "The complete victory of the present revolution will mark the end of the democratic revolution and the beginning of a determined struggle for a socialist revolution.... The more complete the democratic revolution, the sooner, the more widespread, the cleaner, and the more determined will the development of this new struggle be."¹

The bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905-1907 ended in the defeat of the proletariat and its allies. But the tasks defined by Lenin once again confronted Russia's revolutionary forces in 1917, when the February Revolution gradually developed into the October Revolution. Two years earlier in the aforementioned article *On the Slogan for a United States of Europe* Lenin wrote that the socialist revolution "should not be regarded as a single act, but as a period of turbulent political and economic upheavals, the most intense class struggle, civil war, revolutions, and counter-revolutions".² Incidentally, this thought is particularly significant today when social development in advanced capitalist countries forces people to abandon the idea of revolution as being some sort of doomsday. That is why we speak about a world revolutionary process although the period of revolutionary development does not, of course, preclude acute critical moments.

It should be noted that in our day democratic and socialist tasks have become even more closely intertwined because the struggle for consistent democracy is being conducted by the socialist-minded proletariat and its allies against the ruling bourgeoisie, and also because this democracy inevitably leads to socialism. Therefore

¹ Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 130.

² Ibid., Vol. 21, pp. 339-40.

it is all the more important not to over-accelerate the pace of socialist transformations so as not to lose the support of the masses which only gradually assimilate socialist ideas, and not to forfeit the gains already achieved in the democratic struggle. This has been confirmed by the lessons of Chile, on the one hand, and the lessons of Portugal, on the other. But Lenin had spoken about these things on the eve of the October Revolution. "To develop democracy to the utmost, to find the forms for this development, to test them by practice, and so forth—all this is one of the component tasks of the struggle for the social revolution."¹ While the bourgeois democracy in Russia in the period preceding the October Revolution could not satisfy the people, in modern capitalist countries, democracy promoted by the people against the bourgeoisie has by no means exhausted its potential.

The Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution in permanence promoted understanding of the fact that in Russia with her contradictions of diverse types engendered by the intertwining of bourgeois and semi-feudal relations, the socialist revolution could not have been pure or classical in the orthodox, bookish understanding of socialism. And even if it was socialist in its political substance and results, it had to resolve two urgent tasks, that of withdrawing Russia from the war and allotting land to the peasants.² This, in the first place, fused the bourgeois-democratic and socialist stages of the revolution into a single whole, for while the second stage was already

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 457.

² The following figures attest to the acuteness of the agrarian question in pre-revolutionary Russia: 10.5 million peasants owned 75 million hectares, just a little more than the total land area owned by 30,000 landowners (70 million hectares). A single landowner possessed more than 2,000 hectares on an average, compared with 7.5 hectares per peasant household. By 1917 30 per cent of the peasants had no horses, 34 per cent had no farm implements and 15 per cent had no crops.

under way in the town, the first stage, inasmuch as its problems had not been resolved by the February Revolution, lasted in the countryside right up to the middle of 1918. "We solved the problems of bourgeois-democratic revolution in passing," Lenin wrote, "as a 'by-product' of our main and genuinely proletarian-revolutionary, socialist activity."¹ The unconditional fulfilment of bourgeois-democratic tasks by the October Revolution cleared the way for socialist transformations; and contrarywise, the socialist orientation of the revolution made it possible to solve bourgeois-democratic tasks to an extent to which they had never been solved before. In the second place, the uprising and the revolutionary initiative of the urban proletariat was supplemented by the peasant war which had flared up prior to the October Revolution and at first manifested itself in refusal to pay rent, then in a spontaneous seizure and redistribution of large private, church and crown landed estates, in the destruction of country estates owned by the nobility and so forth.

Although the Bolshevik Party supported the seizures, it at first was not orientated on approving the redistribution of the landed estates among the peasants inasmuch as its programme documents right up to the October Revolution envisaged the transformation of these estates into public farms run jointly by former agricultural labourers² as the optimal variant. In April 1917 Lenin considered it necessary "to think about going over to large-scale farming conducted on public lines and to tackle this job at once..."³ But the peasants had not yet matured for such a transition and the appearance of peasant associations here and there did not reflect the general sentiment in

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 54.

² See Resolution VII (April 1917) of the All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP in *Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences and CC Plenary Sessions*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1970, p. 444 (in Russian).

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 169.

the countryside. And so Lenin made a brilliant political turn.

At the moment of the establishment of Soviet power the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets on Lenin's initiative adopted the famous Decree on Land which proclaimed the confiscation of landlords' estates, livestock and implements. The Decree also stipulated that it should be implemented in keeping with a document compiled by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party on the basis of 242 peasant mandates. On the one hand, this document envisaged the nationalisation of land, the right to land-tenure to all citizens, provided they themselves tilled the land, prohibition of the leasing of the land and the employment of hired labour. On the other hand, this summary peasant mandate whose text was directly included in the Decree on Land, orientated the countryside towards equalitarian distribution of land and its periodical redistribution among the peasants. It likewise proclaimed complete freedom of choosing the forms of land-tenure which would be chosen by village communities. True, the Decree also envisaged the transformation of lands where high-level scientific farming was practised into public farms; but this reservation, even though it conformed to the Bolshevik programme, was very rarely put into effect.

It shocked some dogmatic Bolsheviks that Marxists borrowed a petty-bourgeois, Narodnik programme. For their part, the Socialist-Revolutionaries were incensed with this "plagiarism". But in spite of the fact that the equalitarian redistribution of land was not in line with the Bolshevik programme, Lenin said: "We cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the fire of experience, applying the decree in practice and carrying it out locally, the peasants will themselves realise where the truth lies."⁴

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 260.

Lenin and his associates believed that the course of events would gradually lead to socialist changes in the countryside. They had reason to think along these lines because all lands, including those held by peasants, had been nationalised. The peasants supported nationalisation as the most facile method of unravelling the incredibly complicated agrarian relations. But the nationalisation of land also meant the establishment of a common stock of land for use and the abolition of private property in land, including peasant lands. Land could no longer be purchased or sold. In this way "an agrarian system" which Lenin described as "the most flexible from the point of view of the transition to socialism"¹ began to emerge in Russia.

This step was of exceptional importance for developing revolutionary theory and practice, since Lenin's Decree on Land virtually for the first time in Marxist literature stipulated the need for lengthy co-operation between a workers' state and the peasantry not united in co-operatives, and thus framed a new strategy of transition to socialism.

Nationalisation was acceptable and desirable for the peasants, since the Russian village, where the commune—an assembly of heads of peasant families—remained a functioning institution, as a rule had no traditions of lasting individual land ownership. But while nationalisation took place in line with the socialist nature of the new state, the equalitarian distribution of the landed estates and their systematic re-allotment (redistribution) was not in line with this nature, so that all this was definitely in the interests of the peasantry. In the socialist countries which came into being after the Second World War, and where small-holder traditions were quite strong, the socialist authorities made a similar concession by not nationalising the land.

¹ Ibid., Vol. 24, p. 62.

Under the Decree on Land nearly 150,000,000 bect-ares of land were turned over to the peasants of Russia free of charge. Moreover, they were released from annual payment of rent which together with expenditures on the purchase of new lots amounted to 700 million rubles in gold and from their mortgage debts totalling 1,300 million rubles.

On the whole the peasants received all these benefits at the expense of the landowners and the bourgeoisie. And yet the redistribution of land precipitated class conflicts in the countryside. Having received their portion of the land confiscated from the landowners, the kulaks managed to retain the land they had acquired prior to the revolution. Thus, the equalitarian principle of land distribution was not effected to the full. On the other hand, in some regions where landlord property rights had passed into the hands of urban and rural capitalists before the revolution (in the Central Industrial Region around Moscow, for example) the kulaks were also greatly affected by confiscation. But the anti-kulak redistribution of land took place at a later period.

The Bolshevik Decree on Land won the All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies (which had a Socialist-Revolutionary colouring), which took place in November 1917, over to the side of the Soviet Government. Moreover, the Congress endorsed Lenin's appeal "To the Toiling Peasantry" which called on the peasants to consolidate their alliance with the insurgent workers and support the Soviet Government. After that, seven representatives of the party of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries were included in the Soviet Government. Co-operation of the proletarian and petty-bourgeois forces was so successful at that time that socialist-minded Left Socialist-Revolutionaries even raised the question of a merger between their party and the Bolsheviks.

Noteworthy was the stand of other parties on the agrarian question, which vied with the Bolsheviks for lead-

ership of the masses. The Mensheviks regarded the peasant question as an atavism they were seemingly ashamed of and which in effect they tried to freeze pending a decision of the Constituent Assembly. Plekhanov accused Lenin of "peasant deviation" for drawing up the Decree on Land. Karl Kautsky, the leading theoretician of the Mensheviks, in his book on the Russian revolution published at a later date, attempted to prove that the Bolsheviks had supposedly capitulated to the peasantry.¹ In words, the Mensheviks proclaimed themselves supporters of the socialist orientation of the Russian revolution, but by impeding the solution of the agrarian question, they in effect slowed down revolutionary development. Another section of the petty-bourgeois camp in the revolution—the Socialist-Revolutionaries—not only gave no support to the peasant movement, but in actual fact opposed their own agrarian programme by persuading the peasants not to respond to the Bolshevik summons immediately to seize landed estates. Less than a month before the October Revolution, Socialist-Revolutionary S. L. Maslov submitted to the Provisional Government, in which he was Minister of Agriculture, a draft law directly aimed against such seizures. It did not envisage the confiscation of landed estates, which was what the peasants demanded and what the Socialist-Revolutionaries promised them at the beginning of the revolution, but only the establishment of a reserve stock that would consist only of those lands which landlords formerly let out on lease to the peasants. A comparison of the Socialist-Revolutionary and Bolshevik positions prompted the peasants to take the side of the Bolsheviks.

Lenin's brilliant ability to take into account Russia's specific social structure and the prevailing situation won the Soviet Government the support of the rural majority of the country's population lacking which it could not

¹ See K. Kautsky, *Die Diktatur des Proletariats*, Wien, 1918.

have remained in power. The peasant colouring of the Russian proletarian revolution or, to use a more general term, the consummation of the socialist revolution in a relatively backward country where capitalist relations had not attained all-round development, demonstrated the political audacity of the Bolshevik Party that stood at the head of the revolution. In their notions, Kautsky and other Social-Democratic dogmatists did not envisage a revolution of this sort. The Great October Socialist Revolution which overturned these notions is the best possible argument in favour of diversity of revolutionary paths both for the Third World countries and for industrialised states where, as distinct from Russia in 1917, there are the so-called new social strata with their own social aspirations, which nevertheless are the natural allies of the working class.

THE PEACEFUL ROAD— AN UNREALISED POSSIBILITY

The proletariat's strength, concentration and militancy and its reliance on the peasant and soldier masses coupled with the weakness and indecision of the bourgeoisie resulted in the relatively bloodless nature of the October Revolution. Years later the liberal American historian Frederick L. Schuman observed: "The Soviet Government between November and June, 1917-18, established itself and pursued its program with less violence and with far fewer victims than any other social revolutionary regime in human annals."¹ It took much fewer human lives to seize the Winter Palace than it did to depose tsarism. In 73 towns in Russia out of 91, Soviet power was established without violence. One of the reasons for the relatively bloodless seizure of power was the fact

¹ Frederick L. Schuman, *Russia Since 1917*, New York, 1957, pp. 98-99.

that the solution of many class antagonisms had been deferred. History shows that in most revolutions the number of human losses increases in their later stages. And Lenin had foreseen this. A. A. Joffe, member of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party at the time, recalled that in the night of the uprising "when we all rejoiced that the coup came off with such little loss of blood, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin suddenly became very serious and said: 'Don't rejoice. We shall yet see a great deal of blood. Those with weak nerves should better resign from the Central Committee now'.¹"

Bloodlessness, naturally, did not mean absence of violence. Its most vivid expression was the overthrow of the Provisional Government, the arrest of its ministers and disbandment of its bodies. Then followed the closure, or sequestration of Right-wing newspapers, the arrest of the leaders of the major bourgeois party of Constitutional-Democrats as counter-revolutionaries and its prohibition.

Although the socialist revolution in Russia did not follow the peaceful path, the possibilities for it developing along this path did exist as Lenin pointed out time and again. It should be borne in mind that in February 1917, as a result of the overthrow of the monarchy, Russia unexpectedly became the world's freest country in which the people enjoyed maximum legality and had every chance to express their wishes. At the same time the masses, because of their "unreasoning trust", as Lenin put it, were not against the Provisional Government remaining in power, while the organs of these masses—the Soviets which were still under the influence of petty-bourgeois Menshevik and SR parties—did not aspire to full power and, on the contrary, conceded first place to the Provisional Government. The result was dual power. In these circumstances there could be no talk of depos-

¹ E. V. Klopov, *Lenin in Smolny*, Moscow, 1965, p. 28 (in Russian).

ing the Provisional Government, but only of the Bolshevik Party peacefully winning over the masses and their organs—the Soviets—to its side so that subsequently the revolutionary Soviets would be able to concentrate power in their hands. "...Only at the present moment," Lenin wrote at the time, "as long as the capitalists and their government cannot and dare not use force against the masses, as long as the mass of soldiers and workers are freely expressing their will and freely electing and displacing *all* authorities—at such a moment any thought of civil war would be naïve, senseless, preposterous..."¹

Only at the present moment... For insofar as the masses got rid of their "unreasoning trust" and the Bolsheviks increased their influence, socio-political relations worsened and clashes between the opposing groups acquired an increasingly armed nature, the Provisional Government began to resort to violence to deal with the revolutionary masses so that the possibility of a peaceful development of the revolution gradually faded. It disappeared altogether as a result of July events—the mass manifestations against the Provisional Government and government troops firing on demonstrators. The Bolshevik Party was forced to go underground.

The prospect for a peaceful transition of power to the revolutionary proletariat appeared once again, at the end of August and beginning of September 1917, when the military revolt led by General Kornilov was routed and active counter-revolutionary forces sustained a major defeat. The weakened Provisional Government gave up its policy of armed violence against the masses. The Bolshevik Party emerged from the underground and the role of the Soviets, in which it became the leading force thanks to its decisive contribution to organising the defeat of the Kornilov revolt, increased considerably. All this enabled the Bolsheviks to return to their July de-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 62.

mand: all power to the Soviets and the replacement of the Provisional Government with a government answerable to the Soviets. "Now, and only now, perhaps *during only a few days* or a week or two," Lenin wrote, "such a government could be set up and consolidated in a perfectly peaceful way."¹ And further: "By seizing full power, the Soviets could still today—and this is probably their last chance—ensure the peaceful development of the revolution, peaceful elections of deputies by the people, and a peaceful struggle of parties inside the Soviets; they could test the programmes of the various parties in practice and power could pass peacefully from one party to another."² Events, however, took a different course: the Mensheviks and the SRs prevented the Soviets from seizing power, opposed socialist revolution and found themselves on the opposite side of the barricade.

Thus, it was not the fault of the revolutionary forces that the possibility of a peaceful development of the socialist revolution in Russia had not been exploited. But at the time Lenin regarded such a possibility a rare exception. The situation changed thanks to the radical shift in the balance of world forces in favour of socialism as a result of the Second World War and later. The rise and consolidation of the world socialist system, the transformation of the Soviet Union into one of the world's greatest industrial, military and political powers, the sharp exacerbation of contradictions between the monopolies and the people in capitalist states and the gradual emergence of a broad anti-imperialist front led by the working class, the disintegration of the colonial system, and the increasing influence of the communist movement signified the appearance of an opportunity to build up a preponderance of strength against the monopoly bourgeoisie large enough to create conditions for moving

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 306.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, pp. 67-68.

towards socialism along the peaceful road, by-passing civil war. Beginning with the early fifties, this opportunity has been recorded in the documents of the meetings of Communist and workers' parties.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to absolutise only one path. It is important to take into account the situation and the specific features of the development of each individual country. This conclusion is confirmed, for example, by the military fascist coup in Chile and the deposal of the socialist-orientated Allende government which came to power by peaceful means.

Finally, it is important to take into account that the peaceful road does not preclude acute class clashes, not necessarily armed, and that, on the other hand, there may be periods of peaceful development as it had happened in Russia in 1917, in the course of a predominantly non-peaceful course of events. That explained why Lenin opposed absolutisation of any one form of struggle, and "illusion of *only the peaceful, only the legal road*".¹ On the other hand, however, even a revolution which takes resort to civil war cannot absolutise violence without undermining its own significance. "There is no doubt that without this, without revolutionary violence," Lenin wrote, "the proletariat could not have triumphed. Nor can there be any doubt that revolutionary violence was a necessary and legitimate weapon of the revolution only at definite stages of its development, only under definite and special conditions, and that a far more profound and permanent feature of this revolution and condition of its victory was, and remains, the organisation of the proletarian masses, the organisation of the working people."²

Neither during nor after the October Revolution was violence regarded as an aim in itself. Many journals and newspapers which were in opposition to Soviet power

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Marxism on the State*, Moscow, 1972, p. 18.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 89.

continued to be published and petty-bourgeois democratic parties continued to function legally; on top of that they had their representatives in the country's supreme executive body—the All-Russia Central Executive Committee which was elected by the All-Russia Congress of Soviets—in the form of parliamentary opposition. During the October Revolution violence did not overflow into physical extermination of the enemies, that is, not until the counter-revolution itself took this step. This happened at the very beginning of the socialist revolution, in November 1917, when counter-revolutionary detachments which had seized the Moscow Kremlin killed its revolutionary guard. Workers and soldiers paid with their own blood for their irresolute and indecisive attitude towards the counter-revolution and it was bitter experience that made them take to the path of a relentless armed struggle.

In the first place, the October Revolution signified that for the first time in history political power in Russia was in the hands of the formerly oppressed classes and, in the second place, that new power had launched the task of reorganising the administration of the country along new lines. "We, the Bolshevik Party," wrote Lenin at the beginning of the revolution as he formulated its aims, "have *convinced* Russia. We have *won* Russia from the rich for the poor, from the exploiters for the working people. Now we must *administer* Russia."¹

Therefore the Bolshevik Party's main aim was creation and not destruction as some shortsighted and biased observers had imagined. In substance the victorious October uprising was only the first act of the socialist revolution. The chief objective was to abolish the system of exploitation reorganise the entire social structure along new lines and this meant to secure the toiling classes and their Party which had accomplished the revolution in the administrative and organisational functions, to train

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 242.

workers and peasants in the art of state administration and finally to set up new organs of power and new social institutions.

THE SOVIETS—A NEW TYPE OF POWER

The Soviets of Workers'—and also Soldiers', Agricultural Labourers', and Peasants'—Deputies became bodies of new authority and the country's most influential political institution. As bodies of the independent activity of the insurgent masses, Soviets first appeared during the revolution of 1905 and were disbanded by the victorious monarchistic counter-revolution. As far back as 1906 Lenin characterised the Soviets as follows: "It was an authority open to all, it carried out all its functions before the eyes of the masses, was accessible to the masses, sprang directly from the masses, and was a direct and immediate instrument of the popular masses, of their will."¹

After the February Revolution the masses spontaneously began to restore the Soviets throughout the country and on a much wider scale than in 1905. The more amazing was Lenin's farsightedness: already before the February Revolution he came to the conclusion about the inevitable replacement of the "old ('ready-made') state machine and parliaments by *Soviets of Workers' Deputies* and *their* trustees. Therein lies the essence!!"²

Not a single ordinance of the Provisional Government could enter into force without approval by the Soviets. In some towns the Soviets exercised full power even before the October Revolution, ousting the unauthoritative commissars of the Provisional Government and the former self-government bodies—town dumas—which at

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 245.

² V. I. Lenin, *Marxism on the State*, p. 51.

best became something in the nature of municipal commissions under the Soviets. All this produced a situation which could be qualified as dual power. Characteristically, even Prince Lvov, the first chairman of the Provisional Government, acknowledged that his government was authority without power, while the Soviets of Workers' Deputies were power without authority.

In the eyes of the revolutionary people of Russia the Soviets were politically attractive because they combined maximum revolutionariness with maximum democratism. Their democratic nature was manifested in the fact that from the moment of their restoration after the February Revolution they were either directly or indirectly connected with the toiling masses, the working class above all, and virtually identified themselves with them. The lower executive bodies of the Soviets were elected first at industrial enterprises and (insofar as the majority of them were Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) in military units. This principle (which can be qualified as production-based) remained in effect in the structure of the Soviets until the middle of 1918. In this way the urban bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata in the main did not participate in the elections to the Soviets, so that at first there was no need to resort to legal restrictions. As regards the countryside, at the outset the entire population voted in the elections, but there the Soviets were not widespread. The duties of the deputies and their accountability to the electorate prevailed over their rights. They had to fulfil their functions without remuneration; and could be removed or recalled at any moment, in just the same way as executive bodies and officials of the Soviets.

Right up to the summer of 1918 the Soviets had neither a Charter nor Rules; they did not exist in all parts of the country and were set up in villages later than in the towns; their functions were not strictly defined: their order of work, the term of office, and dates for new elec-

tions were defined by the masses in the localities. Therefore, depending on circumstances the activity of the Soviets was initially characterised by considerable confusion and separatism. In some gubernias, uyezds and even volosts there often appeared "Soviet republics", with their own governments, state machinery and laws. Later Lenin came out against "Kaluga" and "Kazan" legality and spoke in favour of creating a single legality for the whole of Russia; but in the initial period of Soviet power he viewed such separatism "essential" and even "benelicial". Later he said: "...We relied entirely on the forces in the localities," gave them "full scope for their activities", and "looked to the localities for the enthusiasm that made our revolution swift and invincible".¹

Such facts attest to the presence of a spontaneous element in the activity of the Soviets. Lenin pointed out that "the masses had created the Soviets even before any party had managed to proclaim this slogan".² But spontaneity is not always and under all circumstances a manifestation of the low level of the revolutionary movement. In Russia in 1917 it was an indirect result of the vast organisational, educational and propaganda activity conducted by the Bolsheviks for many years prior to the revolution, and in the final count it was a function of the awareness and political maturity of the working class. "It is beyond doubt," Lenin noted, "that the spontaneity of the movement is proof that it is deeply rooted in the masses, that its roots are firm and that it is inevitable."³

Lenin could discern in the spontaneously appearing Soviets a basically new form of state power. This discovery was all the more momentous because it was made at a time when the Bolsheviks were only an insignificant minority in the Soviets. But the petty-bourgeois parties which dominated the Soviets and opposed the Bolsheviks

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 394.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 90.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 31.

viewed the Soviets as being merely provisional self-government bodies and called them "provisional barracks for power".¹ Subsequently the SR leader Victor Chernov conceded that the period of SR and Menshevik domination was "an epoch of careful self-restriction of the Soviets".²

Lenin and the Bolsheviks formulated and implemented a programme of concentrating full power in the hands of the Soviets. In June and July 1917 when the activity of the Soviets was inhibited by their SR-Menshevik leadership, the Bolsheviks were confronted with the question whether their Party should take over power directly or through other representative bodies where their influence was predominant such as, for example, factory committees exercising workers' control at industrial enterprises. But Lenin's party regarded the Soviets as the most representative revolutionary institution whereas the factory committees in view of their specific nature had no institutional ties with the peasant majority of the country's population. In August and September 1917 their confidence in the Soviets was rewarded: the Soviets were Bolshevised as a result of elections in the course of which many non-affiliated deputies went over to the side of the Bolsheviks. It was in the name of the Soviets and with their active participation that the October uprising was carried out: the headquarters of the uprising, the Revolutionary Military Committee, which operated under the direct guidance and with the participation of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee, had been set up by the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and was formally subordinated to it, and the insurgents conferred authority upon the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets which adopted the historical decrees on Peace and Land.

¹ *Izvestia*, October 12, 1917.

² *One Year of the Russian Revolution*, Moscow, 1918, p. 59 (in Russian).

The Soviets created a new type of relations between people, and a new society. The intricate hierarchic system of social estates was replaced by revolutionary equality: the Congress promulgated a decree proclaiming all the inhabitants of the country citizens of the Russian Republic. The church was separated from the state and the school from the church.

The struggle against illiteracy and benightedness of the people was a task of paramount importance, and the practical steps that were taken in this direction inaugurated the cultural revolution in the country. All estate privileges in the field of culture were abolished and schools, institutions of higher education, libraries and museums flung open their doors to the toiling people. The grandiose objectives in the cultural field merged with organisational and administrative tasks, for it was imperative to arm all the working people with adequate knowledge to set about building and organising a new life. This also meant that the cultural revolution coupled with the socio-political revolution formed new value orientations, gave rise to new behavioural norms, a new way of life, a new attitude to work and to society, in other words, it gave birth to a new civilisation.

Spontaneous in no small degree, the law-making activity of the Soviets was very intensive and productive. It was only natural, however, that some of the laws they passed were rather curious. For instance, a collection of decrees promulgated by Soviet power contained a clause preventing people "related by blood or marriage" from working together in Soviet organisations; a law prohibiting demands that people entering institutions of higher learning should present certificates of education (although to a certain extent it was thanks to this law that millions of semi-literate people received access to knowledge); and there was even a decree under which lotteries were banned in order to prevent the growth of "agitation, gambling and speculation".

Far from all decrees were implemented; many were shortly swept away by life itself. But they awakened thought and unfettered the creative activity of the population as ever broader sections became involved in this tempestuous movement. They were the best and the most effective form of revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary action.

The Soviets were highly democratic, for they had the support of the majority of the people. Historian N. N. Demochkin has estimated that the pre-revolution Soviets represented almost 110,000,000 people.¹ In those years there were 1,429 Soviets, including 98 gubernia Soviets, in the country. They had been set up in the majority of the towns, but only in 1.6 per cent of the rural volosts.² In most cases they were elected by secret ballot.

Their party colouring was exceptionally motley. In the first few months after the revolution the Bolsheviks still comprised less than a half of the deputies to the Soviets (39.9 per cent; and 8.5 per cent of their sympathisers from among the delegates to the uyezd congresses of Soviets), while their opponents made up about one-fifth (Left SRs—12.2 per cent, Mensheviks, Right SRs, anarchists and others—7.3 per cent), and one-third of the members had no party affiliation. The Bolsheviks as the most compact and decisive force which stood at the head of the state, controlled the Soviets through their deputies, but often indirectly and sporadically. As far as the village Soviets were concerned, this heterogeneity subsequently developed into a source of weakness, but that was precisely what at the early stage demonstrated the all-embracing strength of the revolutionary system.

¹ N. N. Demochkin, *V. I. Lenin and the Formation of the Soviet Republic*, Moscow, 1974, p. 141 (in Russian).

² Volost, uyezd and gubernia were administrative-territorial units in Russia.

The Soviets were not only democratic to a maximum; they also maximally conformed to the spirit of genuine Marxism. They embodied Marx's conception of a proletarian state formulated in his *The Civil War in France*: "The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town (Paris—*Ed.*), responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. . . . Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune."¹

Substitute in this passage the word "Soviet" for "Commune" and the word "Petrograd" for the word "Paris" and you will get a picture of Russia at the end of 1917.

The Soviets were more than mere organs of power, they combined its three functions—legislative, executive and judicial. They were a form of direct democracy—the power of the people and for the people. These aspects of the activity of the Soviets are most topical, particularly for socialist countries seeking new forms of combining representative and direct democracy.

Having replaced the monarchy swept away by the people, the Provisional Government left the old state machinery practically intact and thus inevitably disappointed the revolutionary people which, naturally, expected radical actions on the part of the Soviets. The latter's historical service was that in October 1917 they demolished the old state system and smashed the entire apparatus of oppression—the army, the police, courts and prisons. The concentration of full power in the hands of

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 220.

the Soviets signified the abolition of bourgeois-monarchical officialdom as a social stratum. At the same time the October Revolution showed that the destruction of the old state machinery cannot be achieved at one stroke. It is a complicated and, depending on circumstances, a drawn-out process, the reverse side of the process of creating a new machinery of state which presupposes the employment, within certain limits, and the restructuring of some elements of the old machinery of state, particularly the economic management machinery.

Guiding the resolute destruction of the old system, Lenin at the same time took into consideration that state-monopoly capitalism had already set up the mechanism of economic management which the socialist state could and should take over. He elaborated this thought in detail in his classical works, *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It* and *The State and Revolution*, written in August and September 1917, on the eve of the October Revolution. It is not by accident, therefore, that in formulating its strategy in the struggle for socialism of which democratic reforms, essentially of a revolutionary character, are a component part, the present-day communist movement in advanced capitalist countries takes into account the ideas set forth in these works. "...The mechanism of social management," wrote Lenin in those days, "is here (in state-monopoly associations—Y.A.) already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machine of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly-equipped mechanism, freed from the 'parasite', a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and accountants..."¹ While the revolution smashed the political institutions of the bourgeois state

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 426.

and its organs of class coercion, it could make use of its economic institutions. Lenin's observation about the banks is characteristic in this respect: "There was not a man among us who could imagine that an intricate and subtle apparatus like banking, which grew out of the capitalist system in the course of centuries, could be broken or transformed in a few days. We never said that."¹

Having acquired qualitatively new character of political leadership, a matter of paramount practical importance, the Soviet state machinery constituted an alloy of new and old elements. Towards the end of his life Lenin himself polemically underlined that the state apparatus had been taken over by us "from tsarism and slightly anointed with Soviet oil"². The most important thing, however, was that the fresh wind of proletarian leadership swept through the musty corridors of Russia's ministries bringing with it new, socialist forces into state administration.

Before the October Revolution the Bolshevik Party, in keeping with traditional Marxist views, envisaged in its programme documents the disbandment of the regular army and its replacement with the universal armament of the people. The All-Russia Conference of the Bolshevik Party's Military Organisations held at the end of June 1917, for example, included the following point in its resolution: "To protect the country the regular army will be successfully replaced by a people's militia with the shortest possible term of enlistment, with the smallest possible establishment, with elected bodies to take the place of appointed officers and officials."³ This formula which conformed to the orientation of the founders of Marxism towards arming the whole people, mirrored the revolutionary vanguard's hatred for the bureaucratisation

¹ Ibid., Vol. 26, p. 467.

² Ibid., Vol. 36, p. 605.

³ CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 1, p. 470.

of military as well as state affairs, its desire to eliminate the professional administrative apparatus all of which, however, as we shall see further on, clashed with the demands posed by the concrete situation in the country.

Workers' militia detachments initially made up of armed workers who continued to receive their wages were formed prior to the October Revolution at enterprises where politically conscious workers made up the bulk of the personnel. But these detachments were much too weak to protect the country against external and internal enemies.

Immediately after the February Revolution the Soviets launched the democratisation of the old army. All service ranks and insignia were abolished; command functions were turned over to Soviets of Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies; many counter-revolutionary officers were discharged and commanders were elected with the result that the officer corps ceased to exist because officers were often replaced by rank-and-file soldiers. Yet this did not prevent the disintegration of the old army because the people were exhausted by the war. The military force which directly carried out the uprising and opened the road to power for the Soviets consisted of three components. The first and the basic consisted of the armed workers of Petrograd factories, the second was the Red Guard which appeared shortly after the February Revolution and was made up of volunteers most of whom also were workers, and the third included military units that had come under Bolshevik influence. In Petrograd only military cadets and the Cossacks remained on the side of the Provisional Government.

Having come to power the Soviet Government decided to rely on the Red Guard made up of volunteers mainly on the basis of the workers' militia, to defend the country. But it proved too weak for this purpose. And when Kaiser Germany resumed her offensive against the young Soviet Republic, which could have resulted in disaster for the

latter, the Soviet Government began to form a regular Red Army.

As regards the courts, workers', peasants' and soldiers' courts in some parts of the country replaced the bourgeois judicial organs dissolved by the Soviets prior to the October uprising. Made legal by the October Revolution, the new revolutionary courts relied on the old laws "only insofar as they have not been repealed by the Revolution and are not in conflict with revolutionary conscience and revolutionary legal consciousness".¹ Soviet power also tried to enlist the services of some of the old court officials, but almost all the old judges boycotted the new power. Therefore it was not only natural but also inevitable that revolutionaries, including those who were not professional jurists, were sent to work in the new courts. A few weeks or months later some bourgeois judges resumed their duties, but their work was controlled and restricted by people's assessors who had the right to alter the sentence and even suspend a judge from hearing a case.

Sometimes revolutionary legal creativity in the localities assumed rather peculiar forms. For instance, a "law on courts" worked out by the peasants of the village of Selishchevo stipulated that burglars and cattle thieves were to be punished by the mob daw; those guilty of petty theft were to be driven through the village and exposed to public contempt; and murderers were to be sentenced to a term of up to five years' exile or hard labour.

As a rule the revolutionary court was at first rather lenient to political offenders and frequently sentenced them to public censure or fines, and dealt more drastically with hooligans and handits who tried to benefit from the chaos and confusion in the country. Soviet historians know of only one death sentence passed prior to the

¹ *Decrees of Soviet Power*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1957, p. 125 (in Russian).

summer of 1918. It was handed down by a revolutionary court on a marauder from a detachment of sailors stationed in Mogilev. Alongside ordinary courts, the Soviets elected extraordinary revolutionary tribunals, and at times similar functions were performed by the Soviets themselves or by their executive committees.

In order to combat sabotage and counter-revolution an All-Russia Extraordinary Commission (VChK) was set up with branches in all parts of the country. Those who consider that it launched "Red terror" in the country are mistaken. At the beginning of the revolution Lenin in a note to its chairman F. E. Dzerzhinsky proposed that those guilty of crimes against people's power should be either sentenced to a year in gaol, sent to the frontline or fined.¹ And Dzerzhinsky himself recommended the members of the Commission to use the following measures: confiscation of property, exile, deprivation of food coupons, public censure with a corresponding notice in the press. It was only later, when the enemies of the new power resorted to terror, that the Commission turned to more serious repressive measures.

Immediately after the revolution the Bolsheviks were confronted with the urgent task of building up a machinery of state which would not only be novel, but also effective, authoritative and powerful. Weakness could only compromise the revolutionary state. Lenin who prior to the October Revolution naturally emphasised the importance of demolishing the old state and replacing it with "something which is no longer the state proper"²—i.e., by fully elective bodies—after the October Revolution more and more vigorously stressed the importance of the new state being effective, and the need for strict proletarian organisation and administration.

When the historic session of the Second All-Russia

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 375.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 419.

Congress of Soviets, which proclaimed the deposal of the Provisional Government and the victory of the socialist revolution, turned to question of the formation of a new, revolutionary government—the Council of People's Commissars—anarchist delegate K. Yarchuk loudly protested: "What Council of Commissars? What's all this nonsense? Power to the Soviets!"¹ But Lenin who had discovered the Soviets as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, also correctly indicated their functions as a new state apparatus. It was the work of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) that ensured the effectiveness of Soviet power and the unity of the country.

REVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION

Revolutionary democratism manifested itself in the methods by which the new government and its apparatus functioned and in the ways of forming them. The reception room of the Council of People's Commissars was open to all visitors from the first day. "Here you could meet a professor, an actor, a student, Red Guardsmen, workers, peasants and even priests,"² wrote a member of Lenin's reception-room staff in his reminiscences. Of course, all these visitors robbed the head of the Soviet Republic of a great deal of valuable time forcing him to take up small and seemingly insignificant matters (according to A. M. Kollontai, one of the first acts of the People's Welfare Commissariat³ of which she was the head, was

¹ I. P. Flerovsky, *The Bolshevik Kronstadt in 1917*, Leningrad, 1957, p. 107 (in Russian).

² I. V. Dukhinsky-Osipov, "Several Encounters", *Krasnaya Gazeta*, January 21, 1925.

³ A People's Commissariat is a central body of state administration of an individual branch of economy and culture. People's Commissariats were set up by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets in 1917, at first on the premises and in place of the former ministries. They were headed by people's commissars.

to issue an allowance, on Lenin's personal instruction, to a peasant who had lost his sole possession—his horse). Lenin devoted so much time to these matters not only because of his humaneness, but also because he wanted to evolve a new method of work and turn the state machinery to face the people.

As a rule the organisation of people's commissariats took place as follows. Upon being appointed to the post of People's Commissar a prominent professional revolutionary would select a number of assistants from among the revolutionary workers and soldiers and set out to take over the premises of the corresponding ministry. Usually he would come up against the sabotage of the old officials who in addition to stopping work also destroyed documents, stole money and created confusion. The reason for such behaviour was that in those years, in contrast to the modern West, many rank-and-file state employees and intellectuals were in a privileged position compared with the bulk of the working people. Thousands of links connected them with the deposed system. They identified their interests with it and regarded the revolutionary masses as their enemies. The people's commissars were forced to turn for help to the Bolshevik district Party committees and trade unions in Petrograd which later complained that government institutions had deprived them of their best cadres. A group of Baltic sailors and workers employed at the Siemens-Schuckert factory went to work at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, a number of Putilov factory workers went over to the People's Commissariat of the Interior, Mining Institute students and a number of workers of the Seamen's and River Sailors' Trade Union were transferred to the People's Commissariat for Trade and Industry, and students of Higher Women's Courses and Vyborg district workers went to work in the People's Commissariat for Education.

Seeing that they had failed to paralyse the state appa-

ratus, left without pay and faced with the prospect of being tried for sabotage, many officials, junior at first and then senior, started to return to work. Many high officials, beginning with deputy ministers, particularly in military ministries, began to co-operate with the new authority. Subsequently these former tsarist officials made their contribution to the proletariat's victory over the class enemy.

Incidentally, in the initial period after the October uprising, which swept away the old state institutions, the revolutionary masses were infinitely confident in their own strength and were absolutely sure that they could manage without a special administrative machinery. Relinquishment of the traditional bourgeois doctrine of separation of powers made them believe in a swift and imminent removal of the bureaucracy and the abolition of the bureaucratic system. In his book, *The State and Revolution*, Lenin analysed the significance of the Soviets as the embodiment of a new, socialist democracy and outlined prospects of their development. He wrote: "From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands . . . from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether."¹ Lenin believed that there would no longer be any need for a state apparatus in the old sense of the word. But the situation gradually changed as practical experience accumulated, and inasmuch as the increasing requirements for organisation and administration demanded the establishment of a special, more or less stable state machinery consisting of groups of people professionally engaged in administration.

It was clear to Lenin already on the eve and during the October Revolution that the masses could not promptly and directly participate in state administration

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 474.

and that was why he spoke of the need to "learn the skills of administration". As though taking the slogan, popular at that time, as his starting-point, he explained: "We are not utopians. We know that an unskilled labourer or a cook cannot immediately get on with the job of state administration."¹ Elsewhere he wrote about the need to create preconditions for such a shift: "Some of these preconditions are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the 'training and disciplining' of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialised apparatus of postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc."²

The new socialist state needed people to administer the state itself, its economy and society. "And it will be our organisational task," Lenin declared, "to select leaders and organisers from among the people. This enormous, gigantic work is now on the agenda. There could even be no thought of carrying it out if it were not for Soviet power, a filtering apparatus which can promote people."³ On the eve of the October Revolution he believed that under socialism there would be no need in a special managerial stratum and that having taken power the Bolsheviks would be able immediately to draw ten or twenty million people into the administration of the state.⁴ In their turn the advanced, conscious and disciplined workers and soldiers would assume the task of training the masses in state administration and form the connecting link between the Party and the people. And both this forecast and the formula "filtering apparatus", as the first years of the revolution showed, proved to be absolutely correct. Many of the revolutionary workers and soldiers who had been assigned to work in the state

¹ Ibid., Vol. 26, p. 113.

² Ibid., Vol. 25, p. 473.

³ Ibid., Vol. 26, pp. 469-70.

⁴ See *ibid.*, Vol. 25, pp. 425-27 and Vol. 26, p. 114.

apparatus eventually became outstanding political and economic leaders and specialists.

An interesting work which helps understand how the new authority posed and solved the problem of building up managerial personnel is Lenin's *How to Organise Competition?* written shortly after the October Revolution. In it Lenin analysed the role of management and separated the function of direct management (organisational work) from the function of rendering expert advice (advice and instructions of educated people, intellectuals, specialists). While it was still necessary to train people in the second function, many workers and peasants already at that time could perform the first one, due to their sober intellect, literacy, knowledge of people, common sense and experience.¹ In this connection Lenin concluded that it was necessary to make a certain reappraisal and reorganisation of the leading personnel of the revolutionary state and that it would be expedient to promote to first place "practical managers and organisers" to replace the agitators who, as was only natural, had come to the forefront on the eve and during the seizure of power.²

And here another thought is important—the impossibility of building and developing a new state and social system without enlisting the services of professionals. Lenin formulated this thought long before the socialist revolution. In 1902 he spoke about the need to use "*professional* journalists, parliamentarians, etc., for the Social-Democratic leadership of the proletarian class struggle", and approved the criticism of the workers' "primitive" views on professionalism in administration.³ And on the eve of the October Revolution he wrote: "...We need good organisers of banking and the amalgamation of enterprises (in this matter the capitalists have more expe-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 408-13; Vol. 27, p. 262.

² See *ibid.*, Vol. 42, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 481.

rience, and it is easier to work with experienced people), and we need far, far more engineers, agronomists, technicians and scientifically trained specialists of every kind...."¹ Somewhat later he observed: "Without the guidance of experts in various fields of knowledge, technology and experience, the transition to socialism will be impossible...."² At that time, however, only an insignificant minority of Russia's intellectuals sympathised with the Bolsheviks, while most of them were either opposed to the October Revolution or adopted a neutral stand. But the new power's principled course of co-operating with professionals and specialists, including those in the sphere of state administration, with time yielded splendid results and inspired many intellectuals, even those who harboured anti-Soviet feelings, to co-operate with Soviet power. The significance of this guideline transcends Russia's experience. It is directly connected with the approach of the Communist parties in the West to the alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia as the main motive force in the struggle for socialism in the advanced capitalist countries.

Right up to his last illness Lenin time and again returned to the idea of combining, in administration, two functions—organisational and scientific-and-technical, or, in the socio-psychological aspect, two types of leader: a clever, efficient administrator and an educated specialist.

In the initial stage the very genesis of Soviet power engendered the collective activity of the Soviets and their bodies, including the adoption and fulfilment of decisions. But being concerned about the strength and unity of the revolutionary system Lenin, already prior to the October Revolution and even more so after it, raised the question of applying the principle of democratic centralism, prevailing in inner Party life, to all spheres of socio-econ-

¹ Ibid., Vol. 19, p. 489.

² Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 248.

omic activity. In conformity with this principle it was necessary, on the one hand, to "ensure absolute harmony and unity in the functioning" of industrial enterprises and offices, and, on the other, to achieve a "full and unhampered development not only of specific local features, but also of local inventiveness, local initiative, of diverse ways, methods and means of progress to the common goal".¹ Accordingly Lenin not only did not oppose but sought to preserve and organise the spontaneous enthusiasm and creativity of the masses.

It was characteristic of Lenin that in his approach to the problem of combining democracy and centralism already at a time when the threat of disorganisation of the economy and the country as a whole was making itself felt, he devoted much thought to the question of electivity of leaders. While working on *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* he dictated the following passage: "The masses must have the right to choose responsible leaders for themselves. They must have the right to replace them, the right to know and check each smallest step of their activity."² This passage, however, was not included in the final text of the work and was replaced by the theme of one-man management, of appointing leaders with "unlimited", "dictatorial" authority, for he believed that effective economic management was impossible without *unity of will* ensured by the implicit subjection of the will of the masses to the will of the leaders of the labour process. And here, as he pointed out, the latter's actions could, depending on circumstances, resemble "the mild leadership of a conductor of an orchestra" or assume "the sharp forms of a dictatorship". He also stressed that the dictatorship of the proletariat could be effected "*also through individuals*".³

¹ Ibid., p. 208.

² Ibid., p. 212.

³ Ibid., pp. 268, 269.

The so-called Railway Decree which was published on March 26, 1918, was advanced as a model for the organisation of production. Under this decree, full authority on each railway was to be delegated to a leader elected (and shortly—appointed) from among the railwaymen.

As it reorganised the administration the Party did not intend to effect it alone, but only with the support of the masses and involving the entire working people into the process. Lenin emphasised in this connection that "socialism cannot be implemented by a minority, by the Party. It can be implemented only by tens of millions when they have learned to do it themselves".¹

What could bourgeois or petty-bourgeois politicians offer instead of the Soviets? The tsarist Duma, which quietly expired after the February Revolution? The Democratic Conference,² which proved inoperative? The Constituent Assembly whose elections were delayed for so long by the Provisional Government itself that they took place after the October Revolution, when the prestige of bourgeois-democratic bodies had been irretrievably undermined? When the Assembly finally convened in January 1918, the Bolsheviks subjected it to a "test by fire" by proposing that it should adopt a declaration sanctioning the revolution and the decrees of Soviet power. The SR and Menshevik majority³ in the Assembly evaded a discussion of the issue and thereby sentenced the Assembly to death. Revolutionary delegates—not only the Bolsheviks, but also Left SRs—walked out and

¹ Ibid., p. 135.

² The Democratic Conference convened in September 1917 and consisting of representatives of different parties and public organisations, including Soviets, was to act as a parliament. The Left, however, deprived the Conference of authority by boycotting it.

³ This majority did not reflect the actual balance of forces at the time. The distribution of the population by the election districts

the Assembly was dissolved almost without any resistance.

The fact that the uprising ended in victory made it imperative to consolidate the success and not to engage in discussions. The revolution would have petered out if the revolutionary masses had dissipated their energy on pre-revolutionary forms of struggle. Even Plekhanov in his time (1903) said that in the course of the revolution the proletariat would dissolve any parliament if it proved to be counter-revolutionary.

The dissolution of the Assembly which was approved by the working class and received with indifference by the hulk of the peasantry showed that the Soviets and their nucleus, the Bolshevik Party, became the sole real and authoritative force in the country.

In the light of these facts the untenability of Kautsky's appeal not to turn the Soviets into organs of power, into organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat,¹ stands out in bold relief. For a year the Soviets had been exercising their authority, and the working people trusted them and them alone, when out of the blue came a proposal to cross out history on the grounds that the Soviets were allegedly insufficiently democratic.

Obviously the democratic nature of the Soviets did not conform to the traditional, essentially bourgeois, understanding of the word. A person who had been brought up in the Western spirit of piety to parliament, simply could not imagine how an ordinary worker or soldier just off the street could walk into a meeting of a Soviet,

made prior to the October Revolution was prejudicial to the population of towns where the Bolsheviks were particularly powerful. The SRs formed a single group in the Assembly although their party had by then split up into Right and Left wings, and although the Left SRs were incomparably more influential in the country it was the Right SRs who were predominant in the Assembly.

¹ K. Kautsky, *Die Diktatur des Proletariats*, S. 33.

interfere in the debates and even take part in formulating decisions. In order to understand the role of the Soviets, to understand the fact that the Soviets represented maximum democracy, it was necessary to think in a new dimension. But not everyone could do so, particularly in the course of the revolution itself.

But with time this became just as obvious to the most objective of the Western historians as it was to the Communists. The well-known Labourite theoretician G. D. H. Cole wrote that it was "unrealistic" to imagine that revolution could have been successfully carried through in Russia or in other parts of Eastern Europe and Asia by the methods of a "liberal democracy". In this connection he arrived at the following conclusion: "...But it is equally foolish to proclaim dogmatically that Socialism can only come by the road of parliamentary democracy, as the protagonists of the received Second International did in their reaction against proletarian dictatorship."¹

Speaking very highly of the role which the Soviets played in Russia's conditions, Lenin at the same time warned against absolutising them, against recognising them as the general form of socialist statehood. For example, in February 1919 he made in this connection a fundamentally important remark on the draft theses of the Comintern, which included the following phrase: "The natural organs of mass revolutionary struggle which after the victory of the insurrection turn into organs of *power* are the Soviets of Workers' Deputies..." Lenin noted that this formula was not quite correct and should read: "Of the *type* of the Commune and the Soviets (not necessarily the Soviets)."² For him it was not the

¹ G. D. H. Cole, *World Socialism Restated*, London, 1956, pp. 7, 11.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 54, pp. 735, 502.

form that was most important but the substance. In Lenin's view the main aspect of the experience of the Soviets was their direct links, even their identity, with the revolutionary people and, hence, their capability of reorganising society along socialist lines.

THE ECONOMY: FROM WORKERS' CONTROL TO NATIONALISATION

Taking into account the difficulties of economic management and the proletariat's unpreparedness to tackle this task the Bolsheviks did not intend to expropriate all the means of production immediately after the revolution. The Party's economic programme, particularly the documents adopted at its Sixth Congress (end of July-beginning of August 1917), provided for the nationalisation of banks, transport and the biggest enterprises and the establishment of workers' control in other sectors of production so that with time, after the workers had learned to manage production efficiently, it would develop into complete regulation of production. Less than a month before the October uprising, Lenin orientated the revolutionary forces in the following manner: "The important thing will not be even the confiscation of capitalists' property, but a country-wide, all-embracing workers' control over the capitalists and their possible supporters. Confiscation alone leads nowhere, as it does not contain the elements of organisation, of accounting for proper distribution."¹ Lenin's forecast proved correct.

Immediately after the revolution, the Soviet Government nationalised the State Bank, thus striking the main blow at large-scale capital. This measure was not adequately prepared and the resistance of the former bank

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 107-08.

employees delayed it for a while. Having learned its lessons the Soviet Government acted in a different manner with regard to private banks. At first, workers' detachments occupied their premises and only after that the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the country's collective president, approved the decree on their nationalisation.

Those were essential measures which promptly placed Soviet power in control of Russia's finances. The mistake of the Paris Commune which left the bank in the hands of the counter-revolution, was not repeated.

Workers at many industrial enterprises assumed control over production prior to the October Revolution, immediately after the February Revolution. Therefore, the Soviet Government's Decree on Workers' Control over production, storage, buying and selling of all products and raw materials by enterprises was largely a measure legalising the existing situation. Factory Committees—workers' control bodies—at some factories in Petrograd, Moscow and other industrial towns also took over the management of production prior to the October Revolution (sometimes control functions were assumed by trade union committees). At first this was done primarily at state-owned enterprises whose management had either fled or had been expelled by the workers. But at a fairly large number of private enterprises, too, workers' control quickly developed into direct administration. As a rule, this happened because in their efforts to counter the workers' offensive the proprietors resorted to mass dismissals and even lockouts. As a result, the workers could not but resort to what is now commonly termed in the West as take-over of enterprises.

The factory committee was elected by the entire personnel of an enterprise, but in practice the employees who separated themselves from the workers both socially and politically, for the most part, did not participate in the elections. Conferences of factory committees in Petrograd

and throughout the country worked out documents regulating their activity. Accordingly workers' control bodies were authorised to supervise the daily routine at the factory, to elaborate work quotas and wage rates, the procedure for acceptance to work, dismissals and the granting of leaves, to control the observance of these regulations, and the composition of the administration, engineers and technicians. Factory committees also controlled production and finances and had the right to set up special commissions for this purpose. At the same time, according to the instructions, they did not share responsibility with the administration for the latter's decisions. But shortly after the October Revolution this amendment was rejected in view of the owners' sabotage of measures which the new power and workers' control bodies sought to carry through. New instructions drawn up by Petrograd factory committees in January 1918 qualified workers' control as "*a transitional stage leading to the organisation of the entire economic activity in the country along socialist lines...*"¹

Under the conditions of a war-disrupted economy and a flourishing black market, workers' control naturally pursued specific economic objectives: to prevent the enrichment of the bourgeoisie, satisfy the immediate requirements of production, ensure the uninterrupted functioning of enterprises and employment for workers. No less important, however, was that workers' control proved to be a powerful means of mobilising the organisational and creative forces of the working class and drawing the working people into economic management. Taking all this into account, the Government did not insist on strict regulation of the system of control and gave the workers great latitude in displaying their organisational initiative.

¹ *Nationalisation of Industry in the USSR*. Collection of Documents and Materials, Moscow, 1954, p. 78 (in Russian).

And this initiative went beyond the limits of the decrees of the central authority. There were many instances when workers themselves would expropriate an enterprise and then demand legal formalisation of their actions by the central authority.

Such a leap had not been envisaged. Virtually within a few days after the seizure of power it proved necessary to resort to nationalisation without workers' control being fully organised.

When delegates from the workers of the Likino Textile Factory (near Moscow), which belonged to former member of the Provisional Government Smirnov, arrived at the Council of People's Commissars to demand its nationalisation in view of their half-starved existence and the threat of its owner to close it, it was impossible not to admire their determination and not to satisfy their demand. But when requests for nationalisation and decrees meeting them began to pour in an endless stream, the threat to production at the nationalised enterprises became very real. And it was not by accident that Lenin in his programme work *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* written in those years advised to "suspend" the offensive on capital and slow down the pace of expropriation.¹ At the same time, while signing decrees on nationalisation he demanded assurances from the workers that they would not lower the level of production, take care of the nationalised property and maintain labour discipline. Although commitments were assumed willingly, circumstances defeated their fulfilment.

Explaining Lenin's actions, A. Lomov (G. I. Oppokov), one of the then economic leaders noted: "Vladimir Ilyich signed countless decrees on nationalisation of factories and always emphasised that it was much easier to nationalise than to administer the nationalised. But insofar as the mood of the broad circles of workers, which was force-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, pp. 245-46.

fully manifested everywhere in the localities, favoured nationalisation, Vladimir Ilyich considered it impossible to slow down its pace."¹ Therefore, he resolutely defined "completion of nationalisation of industry and exchange" as the basic principle of the economic policy.²

Following individual large enterprises, whole industries became the property of the state. The first to be nationalised in January 1918 was water transport, in the spring of the same year the state nationalised the metallurgical and then the sugar industry and whole groups of engineering factories. On June 28, 1918, the state decreed the nationalisation of the entire large-scale and a part of the medium-scale industry. This decree was implemented in the course of the latter half of 1918.

At the same time Lenin demanded that large-scale nationalisation should become genuine socialisation envisaging the mastery of the expropriated means of production, their inclusion into a single economic system, their effective utilisation and rational management, in a word, to bring the new social system of production and its material and technical means into conformity.

Polemising with the "Left Communists" he wrote that in the prevailing situation (spring of 1918) it was necessary to secure the transition "from confiscation (the carrying out of which requires above all determination in a politician) to socialisation (the carrying out of which requires a different quality in the revolution). . . . The difference between socialisation and simple confiscation is that confiscation can be carried out by 'determination' alone, without the ability to calculate and distribute properly, whereas socialisation cannot be brought about without this ability".³

¹ A. Lomov, "Vladimir Ilyich in Economic Activity", in the book *For Ever Living*, Moscow, 1965, p. 146 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 318.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 333-34.

All the above economic measures—abolition of private property in land, introduction of workers' control, nationalisation of banks and industrial enterprises—did not mean that socialism was established, but were, as Lenin put it, "measures that would lead to socialism by gigantic strides".¹

The expropriation of the bourgeoisie carried out spontaneously in the localities was, as Lenin put it, a "Red Guard attack on capital"². In many ways it promoted the political education of the masses, helped the indigent sections to acquire confidence in their strength and drew them into state and economic administration, and produced gifted organisers and leaders from among the people. Yet, it also had some dangerous aspects.

At first, nationalisation by no means meant that the state took over all enterprises. Of the 3,338 socialised enterprises only 748 (22.5 per cent) had their status changed as a result of the acts of the central authority. The overwhelming majority of enterprises had been nationalised, confiscated or sequestered by the local Soviets, the trade unions and local economic councils. To a large extent the industry was pulled apart by the proletariat's revolutionary organs in the localities. That was why V. P. Milyutin, one of the Party's leading economic specialists, dealing with the character of nationalisation in Russia acknowledged that in carrying it out "a part of the workers... displayed a variety of syndicalism",³ which manifested itself in the transference of economic management to elected representatives of local Soviets and trade-union organisations, whereas the country's central economic agencies at first played a small part in the administration of the enterprises. This, however, conformed to the Bolsheviks' initial understanding of the economic

¹ Ibid., Vol. 26, p. 332.

² Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 247.

³ *The October Uprising and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Moscow, 1919, p. 103 (in Russian).

system of a socialist state as a network of producers' and consumers' communes. "Every factory, every village," Lenin wrote in *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*, "is a producers' and consumers' commune ("an independent commune", he said in his first outline of the article.—Y.A.) whose right and duty it is... in their own way to solve the problem of accounting in the production and distribution of goods."¹

A special agency for the overall guidance of the economy—the Supreme Economic Council—was set up in December 1917 on the initiative of the trade unions and was staffed primarily by members of factory committees and trade unions. Thus, sectoral trade unions were in control of all administrative bodies in their respective sectors. It took some time for industrial administration bodies to detach themselves from the trade unions, and the Supreme Economic Council was entrusted with the task of conducting the nationalisation.

The establishment of the Supreme Economic Council and its local branches—economic councils—proved to be an exceptionally important historical precedent: they developed into the world's first state system of economic management and co-ordination.

Economic management was collective not only at individual enterprises but also on a nation-wide scale; the board of an economic department had the right to veto the decisions of the chairman. But since this undermined effectivity, the principle of one-man management was introduced at Lenin's insistence.

The local initiative of workers' collectives which lacked managerial and administrative experience frequently resulted in mismanagement, wage increases—in squandering of fixed assets, revolutionary destruction of old forms of management—in fruitless arguments and negligence. Very much in vogue at the time was the word *mitingovat* which

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 260.

meant "let's hold a meeting", which reflected the spirit of the period, its strong and weak points and stood for both seething activity of the masses and waste of energy.

Later Nadezhda Krupskaya recalled how often people had a simplified, petty-bourgeois understanding of the passing of enterprises into the property of the whole people. One working woman complained, for instance, that she was fired for cutting off a piece of material at her factory in order to make a dress for herself. Another said that all the workers of her factory decided that they needed an additional day-off. "All of us have a lot of unfinished work at home. We are masters now and therefore we can work when we want to. And so we decided not to work today."¹

These spontaneous actions were theoretically justified by the extreme Left wing of petty-bourgeois democracy. The small SR-Maximalist Party proposed that the Soviet state should be turned into a "labour commune" in which all enterprises would be owned by groups of workers.²

Lenin sharply criticised such spontaneous-anarchistic trends. "The aim of socialism," he wrote, "is to turn all the means of production into the property of the whole people, and that does not at all mean that the ships become the property of the ship workers or the banks the property of the bank clerks."³ That is why he worked for and achieved a revision of "Regulations for Nationalised Enterprises" in order to purge them of the clause providing for the transference of administration of the enterprises to workers' collectives.⁴ Without yielding to pessimism Lenin endeavoured realistically to analyse the reason for the sweeping disorganisation of production. The main

¹ N. K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin*, Moscow, 1966, p. 390 (in Russian).

² See G. S. Gurvich, *History of the Soviet Constitution*, Moscow, 1923, p. 116 (in Russian).

³ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 63.

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 100; Vol. 44, p. 96.

reasons were rooted in the way of life of the ordinary worker in pre-revolutionary Russia which made him hate and mistrust everything that belonged to or was connected with the state. And since this was the case it was necessary to instil in him a careful, thrifty and industrious attitude to nationalised property. All this required effort and time.

The problem of social organisation of labour became one of the primary tasks of the Party and the state. Its most important element in Lenin's opinion was "the strictest and universal accounting and control of the production and distribution of goods" and growth of labour productivity.¹ At the time, it should be noted, the main emphasis was laid not on material incentives promoting labour productivity, but on solving this organisational task through socialist emulation and the discipline and self-discipline of working people.

In the first place, this meant that it was necessary to bring order into the ranks of working people, to condemn stealing and shirking. All enterprises were recommended to formulate their regulations on the basis of what was known as "Bryansk regulations" worked out by the factory committee and the administration of an engineering plant near the town of Bryansk. They envisaged sanctions for carelessness, payment only for the work done, and stipulated that meetings during working hours could be held only with the permission of the factory committee and the management. Lenin also looked into the possibility of employing, in the interest of organising socialist labour, certain rational technical methods in the system of the American engineer and factory owner Frederick W. Taylor.

In the second place, this meant organising competition among working people for normalising and developing production and for the best labour results. Socialist emu-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 241.

lation presupposed a comparison of the labour achievements of individual workers and collectives, encouragement of the leaders and criticism of those lagging behind. It was in this direction that the first shoots of emulation at revolutionary Russia's leading factories developed and which became nation-wide in the years of socialist industrialisation.

In the third place, this meant the introduction of universal labour conscription for all social classes, and for the first time in history the principle "he who does not work, neither shall he eat" became a reality.

Labour conscription, naturally, extended to the intelligentsia, too. Lenin's works written in the first months of Soviet power contain sharp criticism of the bourgeois intelligentsia and office workers, most of whom either directly opposed Soviet power or remained "neutral". It was necessary to make both open and silent saboteurs perform their jobs.

But already in those days the Bolsheviks realised that coercion alone could not be used all the time to make the specialists work for the new authority and that without their participation and technical knowledge there could be no transition to socialism. Since the majority of these specialists belonged to the bourgeois class it was decided to enlist their services with the help of the "old bourgeois method"—they were offered high salaries, many times higher than the average wage of rank-and-file workers. Although this clearly contravened the principles of the Paris Commune, no secret was made of it.¹ The im-

¹ "From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*" (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 220). For the sake of accuracy, however, it should be noted that departure from the principle of equal pay for workers and specialists shortly proved to be a mere formality. The sweeping inflation, disappearance of consumer goods from the market and the transition to payment in kind in the period of War Communism practically eliminated the gap between highly-paid

portant thing was the Soviet power's desire to co-operate with the bourgeois intelligentsia and to persuade it to participate in the building of a new life. And its efforts in this direction were welcomed by the most authoritative representatives of the country's intelligentsia.

Gradually the Party drew qualified specialists into economic management bodies. The Supreme Economic Council ordered its subordinate bodies to reserve a third of the seats on factory boards for technical specialists (it proved impossible to carry out this instruction in full; by the autumn of 1918 only 26.8 per cent of these boards included bourgeois specialists and employees). A serious impediment was the class mistrust of the bulk of the industrial workers for people who were not engaged in manual labour.

There was another side to the problem of inviting specialists, that of using the organisational experience of the bourgeoisie in the interests of socialism, and that meant that it was necessary to "learn from the organisers of trusts".¹ Consequently, in this particular case the bourgeois proprietor had to be viewed not only as an exploiter, but also as an organiser, or, to quote the outstanding Italian Marxist A. Gramsci, as "the highest social product characterised by a certain organisational and technical ability (i.e., a capacity for intellectual activity)...".² Socialism was inconceivable without an adequate level of organisation and technical rationality.

In this connection it was necessary to organise co-operation between the proletariat and private owners. An

employees and low-paid workers. The advanced section of Russian specialists began to support Soviet power not out of economic considerations, but due to purely ideological reasons inasmuch as they came to see for themselves that the creative policy pursued by the Bolsheviks was in keeping with the requirements and aspirations of the peoples of Russia.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 296.

² Antonio Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'Organizzazione della Cultura*, Einaudi, 1949, p. 3.

attempt was even made to set up a mixed state-capitalist trust uniting large engineering and metallurgical factories. The Soviet Government which had been conducting negotiations with a group of capitalists led by Prince A. P. Meshchersky for several months terminated them at the insistence of the metalworkers who refused even to consider the establishment of such co-operation. The situation at that time was such that the revolutionary government was not too dismayed over the failure.

In some, though not many, gubernias (Kostroma, for instance) representatives of private owners at a certain period were members of gubernia economic councils. A whole branch of production—the tanning industry—was organised on the basis of state capitalism throughout the country; factories were not expropriated and were managed by a mixed proletarian-capitalist board with a third of the seats held by factory owners. The state subsidised production and received all the output. (At that time, incidentally, Lenin stressed that such a form of state capitalism was temporary and considered that the government “has the right” to confiscate an enterprise if the need arises.)¹

The purpose was not only to promote economic development and overcome disorganisation brought about by the war and economic dislocation, but also to use state capitalism as an element of the economic structure of socialist society. Later Lenin turned this idea into one of the principles of the system of views which became embodied in the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Such an interpretation of socialism met with vigorous opposition on the part of the “Left Communist” faction²

¹ *Lenin Miscellany XXI*, Moscow, 1933, p. 130 (in Russian).

² “Left Communists” emerged in January 1918 as an oppositional faction inside the Bolshevik Party which criticised Lenin’s course from positions of ultra-Left revolutionism. They generated particularly intensive activity in connection with the Soviet Government’s intention to conclude a separate peace with the coalition of central

headed by Bukharin, which appeared in the Bolshevik Party at the time. It is interesting to note that the views of this group contained in embryo all the conceptions of modern “ultra-Left” elements. Carried away by the revolutionary element, “Leftists” in Russia ignored all the negative aspects of “speechifying democracy”, underestimated the importance of positive organisational tasks, including problems of economic development and management. They repeated the demands of anarchists and SRs to “socialise” *all* the means of production, which in their interpretation meant that they should become the property of individual workers’ collectives. They regarded Lenin’s demand for strict discipline, accounting and control as a return to the old, bourgeois order, and together with the SRs and anarchists maintained, in particular, that co-operation with the capitalists would allegedly lead to the enslavement of the working class. One of their leaders, V. V. Osinsky, who headed the Supreme Economic Council, at the time did everything he could to prevent the establishment of a mixed leather-manufacturing syndicate.

Lenin, however, was confident that a state where power was in the hands of the working class, and where banks and major enterprises had been nationalised had no reason to fear capitalism. He considered that the proletariat of Russia with its highly developed class consciousness could co-operate with individual capitalists. In other

powers and thus bring Russia out of the First World War. They rejected the possibility of compromise between a socialist country and the imperialists and opposed Lenin’s idea of peaceful co-existence. In the field of domestic policy they rejected the need for a long transitional period between capitalism and socialism and insisted on speeding up the abolition of commodity-money relations and the “communisation of everyday life”, and advocated complete economic decentralisation. There was a period when some prominent Bolshevik Party functionaries, including some of Lenin’s associates, adhered to “Left Communists”. The “Left Communist” faction dissolved itself after the signing of the Brest Peace with Germany.

words, his idea was to crush the bourgeoisie politically and utilise its economic and organisational experience.

This creative approach to socialist construction was beyond the comprehension of both the "Left Communists" and Right-wing Menshevik Social-Democrats who were unanimous in condemning as "non-socialist" the idea of a proletarian state employing the services of bourgeois specialists and qualified the demands for accounting and control as "anti-democratic". Approaching the problem of socialist construction from purely dogmatic positions they operated with speculative, non-existent factors; Lenin, however, proceeded from the need to build socialism using the available material.

In the course of his immense organisational activity Lenin was constantly aware of the need to establish the material basis of large-scale industry, having in mind the creation of an advanced technological basis adequate to the new, socialist social system. Already in March 1918 specialists began, on Lenin's instructions, to draw up a plan for the comprehensive development of the Ural-Kuznetsk Coal Basin. At the same time a special council was assigned to draft a plan for the electrification of the country. And although circumstances made it impossible to launch the planned development of production until after the Civil War, the very idea of drawing up a nation-wide economic plan was truly revolutionary. It is worthy of admiration that the idea of planning, now recognised everywhere in the world, began to acquire its first concrete economic forms in war-ravaged revolutionary Russia which had just thrown off the shackles of semi-feudal oppression.

THE PARTY—THE ARCHIMEDEAN LEVER OF THE REVOLUTION

Just as the October Revolution did not take place by chance, neither was the advance of the Bolshevik Party to the forefront a chance development. As can be judged

from the history of the months preceding the October Revolution, its influence mounted swiftly and steadily particularly among the working class. On the eve of the February Revolution the Party had 24,000 members, whereas by October 1917 the figure had reached 350,000.

The reason for this unparalleled growth was that the Bolshevik Party proved to be the only party which sensed and politically expressed the revolutionary sentiments in the country. Its principle was always to be with the masses, even when they erred, and together with them draw lessons from the class struggle. The Bolsheviks did not simply rely on the masses, they also had the ability to bring the masses up to revolution setting such tasks at each stage of the struggle which were both realistic and clear to the masses, and thus guaranteed that the Party would neither succumb to spontaneity nor undertake adventurist expedients.¹ The demands for land and peace did not occupy a central place in the strategic programme of the Bolsheviks adopted as early as 1903: it was only in the course of the development of the revolution that they turned into a magnet for the masses, into a touchstone which alone could determine which party was genuinely revolutionary and therefore enjoyed mass support, and which party was opportunistic and counter-revolutionary. Thanks to their tactic the Bolsheviks at the Second and subsequent congresses of Soviets won over many non-Bolshevik delegates, both those who had no party affiliation and those who had sympathised with the Mensheviks and the SRs. A fairly large part of these delegates subsequently joined the Bolshevik Party. Characteristically, the Bolsheviks actively relied on revolutionary-minded young people. According to foreign observers, the Second Congress of Soviets, which assumed power wrested from the hands of the Provisional Government, was a

¹ *Leninism and the World Revolutionary Process*, Moscow, 1970, p. 20 (in Russian).

"young men's Congress" at which "middle-aged intellectuals" and the "old Socialist party leaders"¹ were conspicuous by their absence.

The headquarters of the uprising, the Revolutionary Military Committee, was established just some ten days before it got under way. But it should be borne in mind that the Bolsheviks carried on intensive political—propaganda and organisational—work in military units, which helped to win them over to the side of the revolution, and also at factories, in Red Guard detachments and workers' militia. In this sense the political preparation for the uprising took up the entire period between the two revolutions. But looking at the events from a wider angle, it can be said that the uprising had been prepared throughout the history of the Bolshevik Party. The October uprising was timed to coincide with the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, and upon arriving in Petrograd many delegates promptly took part in operations which ended in the seizure of power. Thus, reliance on the masses and in a sense merger with the masses was the primary reason why the Bolshevik Party came to play the leading role in the country.

The above facts disprove the version now current in the West that the October Revolution was a Bolshevik "conspiracy"². Even if the Bolsheviks did draw on Blanqui's practical experience and his conclusions that uprising was an art, they had a totally different conception of the Party. Blanqui and Nechayev,³ each in his own way, created strictly *conspiratorial* organisations, and the lat-

¹ Philips Price, *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*, London, 1921, p. 145.

² See, for instance, Hans Kohn, *The Mind of Modern Russia. Historical and Political Thought of Russia's Great Age*, New Brunswick, 1955; P. Sorlin, *La société soviétique*, Paris, 1964.

³ S. G. Nechayev (1847-1882), a Russian revolutionary Narodnik favouring anarchism who was close to M. I. Bakunin, the founder of anarchism. Nechayev advocated the most vicious terror as the main

ter, moreover, viewed his party as an obedient weapon in the hands of its leadership. Lenin, on the contrary, created an organisation of *revolutionaries* relying on a *class*—the proletariat. That was why it took the Bolshevik Party such a short period to develop from a clandestine, relatively small organisation of professional revolutionaries into a genuinely mass party. And what talk could there be of "conspirators" when the Bolsheviks widely proclaimed their intention to overthrow the Provisional Government and assume power. What talk could there be of a "conspiracy" when the *underground* preparations for the uprising assumed a *mass* character and when the uprising which put an end to the old order relied on a fully legal body—the Soviets and their All-Russia Congress. The authors of the "conspiracy" version are extremely inconsistent: at first they blame the Party for being divorced from the people (during the October uprising) and then say that it dissolved in the people (referring to the 1920s).

Apart from the Bolsheviks, only the SRs, or to be precise, the Left SRs who established an independent party in the course of the revolution, could be regarded as a mass party. But they could not contend with the prevailing influence, energy and purposefulness of the Bolsheviks. Although the SRs (thanks to the Left SRs) in the elections to the Constituent Assembly won 58 per cent of the national vote, they could not take advantage of this success in view of the amorphousness and the split of the SR Party. Inasmuch as the SRs relied on the rural population their influence was fragmented, while the strength of the Bolsheviks was concentrated in the most important cities—the nerve centres of the revolutionary process.

weapon of the revolution. His *Revolutionary Catechism* was scathingly criticised by Marx as an example of "barrackroom communism". He died in a tsarist gaol. Western Sovietologists frequently portray Lenin and the Bolsheviks as his followers.

The Mensheviks, on their part, relied on the politically flaccid strata of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the workers' aristocracy which was never of any importance in Russia.

On the other hand, the Bolshevik Party which polled 25 per cent of the national vote, in the first place thanks to the support of the proletariat and the army, and became the second biggest group in the Constituent Assembly, was winning broader and broader non-proletarian sections of the working population to its side. The latter voted for the SRs by force of habit or perhaps they were better known, although in terms of their radical ideas these sections were closer to the Bolsheviks. That was why the influence of the SRs and particularly the Mensheviks declined steadily and the number of Menshevik organisations in Moscow Gubernia dropped by over 50 per cent between August and November 1917.

The Bolshevik Party, even though it had the majority at the Second Congress of Soviets and was thus able to form a government, did not rule out the possibility of "sharing power with the minority in the Soviets" (i.e., with the Mensheviks and Right SRs apart from the Left SRs.—Y. A.), "provided that minority legally and honestly undertake to submit to the majority and carry out the programme approved by the whole Second All-Russia Congress, for gradual, but firm and undeviating steps towards socialism".¹ But this possibility would not be implemented because the Mensheviks and groups close to them walked out of the Congress on their own accord, rejected Soviet power in Russia and opposed the revolution. As a result they, and later the Left SRs, ended up on the other side of the barricades.

Apart from its ties with the masses the Bolshevik Party owed its success to its militant, purposeful activity which enabled it to score a victory in the October uprising and

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 307.

promptly embark on the socialist reorganisation of Russia. The Party's dynamism and its colossal inner energy has been aptly expressed by Lenin in his paraphrase of Archimedes' exclamation: "Give us an organisation of revolutionaries, and we will overturn Russia."¹

Thus, an organisation of revolutionaries was needed. Indeed, the Bolshevik Party alone was orientated towards revolution and was fit for it, so that after the February Revolution it was able quickly to restore its forces and as quickly to push the SRs and the Mensheviks away from the leadership of the Soviets. Somewhat earlier Plekhanov, while stating his disagreement with Lenin's party, acknowledged that the Bolsheviks had "the indisputable advantage of being revolutionaries".²

This revolutionary spirit intertwined with genuinely Marxist conviction, and not only with a knowledge of Marxism but also with a comprehension of its revolutionary, society-transforming essence. Naturally this conviction was alien to a doctrinaire, dogmatic attitude to Marxism. That explains why Lenin rejected all ossified theories. For instance, he did not artificially separate the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions, but combined their solution and was thus able to gain the upper hand not only over those who made themselves out to be champions of pure socialism (Mensheviks) but also over those who pretended to be adherents of peasant democracy (SRs).

Proof of Lenin's creative approach to Marxism and his political audacity is also seen in the fact that he did not wait until the Party would formally win the majority of the people to carry out the revolution, whereas the opportunists in and outside the Party, while insisting on delaying the revolution, referred to lack of support from the peas-

¹ Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 467.

² G. V. Plekhanov, *Collected Works*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, Vol. 19, p. 358 (in Russian).

antry. Lenin wrote in this connection: "The town cannot be equal to the country. The country cannot be equal to the town under the historical conditions of this epoch. The town inevitably *leads* the country. The country inevitably *follows* the town. The only question is *which class*, of the 'urban' classes, will succeed in leading the country, will cope with this, and what forms will *leadership by the town* assume."¹

Only by relying on the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses, the Party managed to overcome the dangerous periods when the indecision of some of its leaders could have caused the Party to lose touch with the people, as was the case in June and the beginning of July 1917, for example, when the Petrograd workers and soldiers began to succumb, even though for a short period, to the influence of ultra-Left-wing, anarchistic groups which demanded the immediate assumption of power by force of arms, although the counter-revolutionary forces were still far from exhausted. A similar situation took shape in September and October when objective and subjective conditions for the victory of the uprising were already at hand, but a part of the CC members opposed the assumption of power because Russia was not "ripe" for socialist revolution, and thus repeated the arguments advanced by the Mensheviks.

The US journalist Albert Rhys Williams who was in Petrograd at that time and was in the thick of events recalled that on October 8 a worker who had attended a meeting at the Obukhov Factory came up to him and his companions and said that most of the men were sick of half-starvation and uncertainty and would "welcome coming out on the streets" to overthrow the Provisional Government. He also said that if that did not happen they would also be disillusioned "with us", meaning Bol-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 257.

sheviks.¹ Lenin also took all these facts into consideration. "There are signs of growing apathy and indifference," he wrote. "... In a revolution, the masses demand action, not words from the leading parties, they demand victories in the struggle, not talk."² The Party adopted this course and succeeded.

The Bolsheviks remained at the helm of the revolution because they were determined politicians whom neither threats, the armed resistance of counter-revolution nor complaints of their "trampling democracy" could deter. In contrast to them the petty-bourgeois parties displayed political timidity and inconsistency. And if the masses had not turned their back to them the revolution would have been definitely doomed. The period between the February and the October Revolution was characterised by the following episodes. When after the defeat of the Kornilov revolt the Bolshevikised Soviets demanded that the All-Russia Central Executive Committee where Mensheviks and SRs were still in the majority should take power in its hands, the latter in spite of everything struck a deal with the Cadets. When this became known an angry worker came up to Socialist-Revolutionary V. Chernov and shouted: "Take power, you son of a bitch, if it's being given to you."³ And the leader of the Mensheviks F. Dan pounded his chest explaining: "Better death than power." The line adopted by the petty-bourgeois parties was not flexible but vacillating and inconsistent. Sometimes they favoured war, sometimes they opposed it, and the same applied to their stand towards the Soviets. While the Bolsheviks displayed revolutionary firmness, the Mensheviks and the SRs made a show of pseudo-revolutionary enthusiasm; they said that they would "die for freedom" hoping

¹ Albert Rhys Williams, *Journey into Revolution*, Chicago, 1969, p. 95.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 184.

³ Albert Rhys Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

to prevent an assault on the Winter Palace, and fled as soon as the first shots were fired.

Even some Western Sovietologists find it impossible to ignore the indecision and inactivity of the petty-bourgeois parties. D. Anin, for instance, makes the point that "the four successive provisional governments were unable to find a solution in the vital and most controversial issues such as peace, land and the Constituent Assembly".¹

Lenin witheringly criticised the behaviour of the Mensheviks and the SRs. "Those poltroons, gas-bags, vainglorious Narcissuses and petty Hamlets," he wrote, "brandished their wooden swords—but did not even destroy the monarchy!... The petty-bourgeois democrats 'compromised' with the landowners, the custodians of the traditions of serfdom, for eight months, while we completely swept the landowners and all their traditions from Russian soil in a few weeks."²

Self-restriction of the revolutionary process spells death for the revolution. And the Bolsheviks were successful because they did not rein in the revolution, but guided it and developed together with it. In this respect it is possible to draw a historical parallel between the Bolsheviks and the Jacobins, and between the Mensheviks and the SRs on the one hand, and the Girondists, on the other. But the advantage of the Bolsheviks over the Jacobins lay in their political realism which enabled them to find a way out of the most critical situations.

The Bolsheviks' political realism arising from their links with the masses and, consequently, their flexibility counterposed the dogmatic inertness of the petty-bourgeois parties. That was why the Mensheviks condemned the division of landed estates by the Second Congress of Soviets as a "non-socialist" act, which nevertheless enabled the

Bolsheviks to establish inviolable ties with the peasant masses and at the same time did not create a barrier to the socialist transformation of the countryside. That was why the SRs did not venture to carry through their own agrarian programme which was borrowed by the Bolsheviks. That was why the Bolsheviks found it possible even if temporarily to co-operate with the Left SRs in the government. That was why the Bolsheviks took practical steps to consummate the revolution, while the Mensheviks tried to make up their minds whether the Russian revolution conformed to Kautsky's prescription.

The Bolshevik Party skilfully exploited the differences between its political opponents with the result that even in that short period (end of December 1917–beginning of January 1918) when it temporarily lost its majority in the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, it managed to secure the approval of all government decrees by acting in a bloc on specific issues with various non-Bolshevik groups in the Executive Committee.

An important factor of the Bolshevik Party's victory was its cohesion and discipline. While the Menshevik and SR parties consisted of several factions which were continuously at loggerheads with each other, thus undermining their ability to act, the Bolsheviks were uncompromising with regard to vacillating elements and splitters. The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party condemned the apostasy of two CC members, Kamenev and Zinoviev, who in their statement published in the non-Bolshevik press on the eve of the October uprising opposed the planned seizure of power, and Lenin even demanded their expulsion from the Party. The Central Committee denounced the actions of a group of people's commissars who two weeks later withdrew from the government in view of the Central Committee's refusal to include Mensheviks in the government. The prominent Party historian A. S. Bubnov stated that "the idea of a militant centralised party—a vanguard with a single programme, tactics and organisa-

¹ *Soviet Studies*, April 1967, No. 4, p. 446.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 52, 53.

tion—was absolutely alien to the organisational principles of the Second International”.¹

Menshevik leaders fiercely attacked this conception of the party, alleging, as Martov did, that Lenin’s “organisational centralism” was untenable from the Marxist point of view. In their pre-revolutionary polemic with Lenin over organisational issues, the Mensheviks had the support of the most influential leaders of the Second International. At the time it never even occurred to them that their own party as an organisation would prove to be utterly unfit to cope with the coming upheavals, a circumstance which would predetermine the defeat of the revolutions in Germany and other Western countries, and how greatly Lenin’s ideas on organisational questions, once translated into reality, would help the proletariat and its state to survive. The concept of a party of a new type has been translated into life in the international communist movement which is the most influential political force today.

The characteristic features of the October Revolution are of non-transient international significance, manifesting themselves in different countries in forms congruent with their national specifics. In the first place this applies to such features as the active, vanguard role of the working class; extensive revolutionary activity of the people in all areas of society; the break-up of the state machinery of the exploiters and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat; direct links between the bodies of revolutionary power and administration and the people; socialisation of the means of production and transition to the establishment of socialist production and other social relations; bringing cultural values within the reach of the working people; leadership of the socialist revolution by a party of a new type.

¹ A. S. Bubnov, “CPSU(B)”, *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, First Edition, Vol. II, Moscow, 1930, p. 286 (in Russian).

Thanks to these features the October Revolution breathed a new life into the international working-class and democratic movement and fed the revolutionary flame throughout the world. Here are testimonies proving this fact. “The revolutionary pride and ability to act which had been buried by Western Social-Democracy,” wrote Rosa Luxemburg in 1918, “have found their embodiment in the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising not only saved the cause of the Russian Revolution but also the honour of international socialism.”¹ Half a century later General Secretary of the French Communist Party, currently its Honorary Chairman, Waldeck Rochet stated: “The victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the establishment of socialism in other countries have created new conditions which make it possible for countries such as France to advance along the path differing from the one which Russian Communists covered in 1917, in order to abolish capitalism and build socialism.”² Finally, Chairman of the Italian Communist Party Luigi Longo, stressing that genuine revolutionariness is inseparable from internationalism, whose component part was reliance on the CPSU’s historical experience, recently wrote in this connection: “There is no doubt that the Bolsheviks’ experience and its study had their effect on our membership and the Party as a whole which we consider positive to this day. . . .”³

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Russische Revolution*, 1922, S. 81.

² *The Great October Revolution and the World Revolutionary Process*, Moscow, 1967, p. 51 (in Russian).

³ Luigi Longo, “A Powerful Force for Change”, *World Marxist Review*, 1976, No. 4, p. 6.

WAR COMMUNISM: AN ERA OF STORM AND ONSLAUGHT

Examining the first months of Soviet power, historians usually note their peaceful character. And indeed the biggest armed clashes inside the country broke out in the summer of 1918. But one cannot fail to recall that already before the revolution Lenin said that civil war could not be averted and repeated this view as soon as Soviet power was established.¹ The situation in the country was *inevitably leading to civil war*; it was a time when the class struggle was assuming the most acute forms and when the opposing sides—the revolutionary people and the bourgeois-monarchistic camp—were determined to clash in a life-and-death battle.

Lenin naturally took account of the circumstances not only in his approach to specific, practical issues, but also

¹ "...Our reply to all these charges of instigating civil war is: yes, we have openly proclaimed what no other government has been able to proclaim. The first government in the world that can speak openly of civil war is the government of the workers, peasants and soldiers. Yes, we have started and we are waging civil war against the exploiters." (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 461.)

to theoretical problems of the revolutionary process. In his works written between 1918 and 1920 he viewed civil war as a general law of revolution. The echo of the storm raging over Russia ringing in his works naturally reverberated throughout the world. Revolutionary repercussions in Germany, Austria-Hungary and other countries raised hopes for an early victory of the socialist revolution on a world-wide scale or at least in many European countries. And although developments took a different turn, the swift victory of the October Revolution and hopes for the world revolution inspired the leaders of the Bolshevik Party to resolute actions which fully precluded half-measures and were designed to "proceed straight to socialism without a preliminary period in which the old economy would be adapted to socialist economy".¹ Later, however, when the war was over and the situation changed Lenin made a still deeper analysis of the possible paths of the revolution in other countries, including its relatively peaceful forms.

At this stage, the heat of the class struggle was also responsible for uncompromising actions on the part of the leaders of the revolution, their determination to make the period of transition from capitalism to socialism as short as possible and at whatever cost to consummate all measures comprising the substance of the first post-revolutionary stage of Russia's history which was completed at the beginning of 1921.

A. V. Lunacharsky, the first People's Commissar of Education in revolutionary Russia, called these years an era of "storm and onslaught". He wrote: "Everything has been carried away by a rushing torrent full of revolutionary enthusiasm. . . . First of all we had to proclaim our ideals in their entirety and mercilessly destroy all that did not suit us. At the time it was difficult to talk about half-measures, about stages, about a step-by-step approach to such an

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 88.

ideal. This was perceived as opportunism, perhaps even by the most 'cautious' people."¹

Such a situation also determined the character of the then prevailing social psychology—spirit of military fortitude, staunchness and lofty impulse, self-restraint, readiness to meet with privations, deep sense of duty and strictest self-discipline. This spirit has been preserved in the vivid characters in many works by Soviet writers and film directors; the image of Chapayev in the novel by Dmitri Furmanov and in the film by the Vasilyev brothers, and Maryutka in a story by Boris Lavrencv entitled *The Forty-First* and in the film of the same name by director Chukhrai, the heroes of the films *Flaming Miles*, *Flames Are Fordless*, to name but a few. Those characters and their prototypes were naïvely straightforward in their behaviour, displaying artless, though lofty confidence in their ability to quickly solve all problems and just as swiftly build communism. At the same time they were amazingly selfless and purposeful.

Theirs was a sort of revolutionary romanticism, characteristic also of the initial stages of some other revolutions, as, for example, the Hungarian revolution of 1919 and the Cuban revolution of 1959. The natural extremes and even utopianism which this romanticism sometimes generated do not obscure its potency and infectious nature since it was engendered by reality.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS: AN ATTEMPT TO OVERTAKE TIME

The need to resort to extreme measures was determined by the exceptionally tense situation in the country: the transition of bourgeois and monarchistic forces to vigorous

¹ *Report of the People's Commissariat of Education to the Ninth Congress of Soviets, Moscow, 1921, p. 4 (in Russian).*

counter-revolutionary activity, including conspiracies, mutinies, and armed struggle which intertwined with foreign intervention. In these circumstances Lenin concluded that it was necessary to "rule out any middle course", that "there was no place left for half-measures in the gigantic struggle against imperialism and capitalism".¹ Later he wrote: "Under conditions of unheard-of economic hardship we were compelled to wage war against an enemy whose forces were a hundred times superior to ours. It goes without saying that under these circumstances we were obliged to go to greater lengths in our urgent communist measures than would otherwise have been the case; we were forced to do it. Our enemies thought they could finish us off; they thought they could bring us to our knees, not in words, but in deeds. They said they would not make any concessions. We replied that if they thought we dared not resort to the most extreme communist measures they were mistaken."²

These measures included nationalisation of the most important enterprises and branches of the economy (barren agriculture); expropriation of the bourgeois, rural as well as urban; deprivation of the propertied classes of political rights; rigid state centralisation of the economy; universal labour conscription and other forms of free labour; steering the course towards abolishing commodity-money relations, introducing material levelling and effecting the transition to state distribution of products in kind; stimulation of communist forms of everyday life; minimisation of economic incentives; administration in the form of military orders. All these measures, as Lenin later admitted, signified an attempt to "go over directly to communist production and distribution."³

The policy of the Soviet Government and the Bolshevik Party in the period of the civil war and foreign interven-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 364.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 220.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

tion has gone down in history as War Communism. Its name alone indicates its primary purpose—the armed defence of the socialist gains against external and internal enemies. This aim, naturally, left its mark on all measures carried out by the Soviet Government. And although the Soviet state resorted to War Communism because of the war and ruin, the war played the role of catalyst in a powerful chain reaction. Needless to say, the socio-economic policy of War Communism was something much deeper and more significant than temporary mobilisation measures to meet the needs of the war. According to historian I. B. Berkhin, “it was precisely the fact that ‘War Communism’ was regarded not only as an emergency economic policy essential for the period of the war, but also a plan for the accelerated transition to communist production and distribution, that accounts for its continuation even after the Red Army had scored a decisive victory in the civil war, and even after the war had come to an end”.¹ It was not accidental that later, in his periodisation of Soviet Russia’s economic development, Lenin defined as single the period from approximately the beginning of 1918 to the spring of 1921 which was replaced by the NEP period.

The name of that first period also reflected the policy line aimed at achieving social equality, intolerance of non-socialist elements, and orientation towards creating communist relations in all areas of social life. But in view of the war and the dislocated economy it proved impossible to implement the second part of the basic principle of communism “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”. Consequently War Communism as a policy, as a definite system of socio-economic relations, differs from communism, the higher form of social development towards which the Soviet Union is advancing

¹ I. B. Berkhin, *The Soviet State's Economic Policy in the First Years of Soviet Power*, Moscow, 1970, pp. 179-80 (in Russian).

and which presupposes large-scale modern production capable of all-round satisfaction of the working people’s requirements.

Lenin noted that in addition to military factors, there were other considerations¹ which dictated the need to go over to “communist production and distribution”: poverty and the ruin caused by the war indicated that the way out of the impasse lay in equalitarian labour and equalitarian distribution. It should be observed that at the time a whole series of key socio-economic problems of the transitional period had not yet been elaborated in the theory of scientific socialism. (Lenin thoroughly elaborated them chiefly in his works written in the 1920s). There was an *a priori* conviction that it was possible to organise production and distribution without economic incentives, on the basis of social relations that would be communist in form, thus shortening the transitional period. The lack of experience of socialist construction resulted in underestimation of difficulties and of increase in the rate and intensity of the struggle for direct transition to communism. In this respect a considerable role was played by the enthusiasm of the revolutionary masses aroused by the swift and seemingly easy destruction of the old order, confusion among the propertied sections of the population, and the people’s profound satisfaction with the expropriation of their yesterday’s masters.

And in spite of the fact that this policy was fundamentally revised in the long run, there is no disputing the importance and the boldness of the measures which had been enforced in the period of War Communism, and which disclosed with particular force the indestructible, uncompromising nature of the great revolution. The main and indisputable achievements of War Communism were the rout of the external and internal counter-revolution, consolidation of the Soviet state and the Communist

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 62.

Party's guiding role, development of the principles of socialist management, organisation of the activity of Soviet state bodies and their apparatus, consolidation of the working classes round Soviet power and the formation of a genuinely national army of builders of socialist society.

At the same time, under the impact of reality serious corrections were introduced in the policy of War Communism. Take nationalisation, for example. Having gone to the extremes in carrying through this course local authorities unnecessarily requisitioned small industrial and even domestic industry enterprises.¹ To put a stop to this All-Russia Central Executive Committee on April 26, 1919, issued a decree prohibiting the municipalisation, nationalisation and confiscation of enterprises owned by handicraftsmen and small-scale manufacturers.

But even after the civil war and the rout of the intervention there was still a strong desire in the Party to continue the War Communism policy and solve economic problems by administrative decree. Moreover, Lenin himself did not invariably connect this policy with the war and sometimes indicated its long-term, or, rather, its strategic character. Thus, at a session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on January 17, 1919, Lenin read out a proposal tabled by the Communist group confirming that the Soviet food policy was "correct and unsailable" and consisted in:

"(a) registration and state distribution on the class principle;

"(b) monopoly of the principal foodstuffs;

"(c) transfer of supply from private hands to state hands".²

He also noted that "people who have suffered so long from hunger are tremendously impatient and demand that

¹ See Y. G. Gimpelson, "War Communism": Policy, Practice, Ideology, Moscow, 1973, pp. 44-45 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 399.

at least from time to time we retreat from this only correct food policy. And we do have to retreat from it now and then; but we shall not desert or depart from our policy as a whole".¹

The orientation towards abolishing trade and replacing it with natural exchange of products had been proclaimed at the beginning of the socialist revolution. In May 1918 private trade in bread was outlawed and then in many other food products. On November 21, 1918, all private trade was outlawed and the People's Commissariat for Food was entrusted with the functions of supplying the population with food and manufactures. The new Party Programme adopted at the Eighth Party Congress in 1919 set the task of "steadfastly continuing to replace trade with planned nation-wide distribution of products".² It was made incumbent on the population, urban in the first place, to unite into consumer co-operatives, also called consumer communes, which would distribute the products received from the Commissariat. The decree on state grain monopoly the Provisional Government had adopted in its time (but failed to enforce), making it obligatory for the peasants to hand over all surplus grain and fodder (with the exception of the seed, personal consumption and fodder reserves) to the state at fixed prices, became effective. The Soviet Government regarded the introduction of grain monopoly as the sole measure capable of saving the famine-stricken proletariat, and at the same time believed that it would help undermine the economic potential of the commercial and rural bourgeoisie.

The Bolsheviks had long wanted to do away with money. They regarded it as the embodiment of the hated capitalism, and imagined socialism as a society in which there would be no commodity-money relations. This conception corresponded to Marx's and Engels' views. Basing himself

¹ Ibid., p. 396.

² CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 2, p. 55.

on these views, Lenin wrote: "Socialism, as we know, means the abolition of commodity economy.... So long as exchange remains, it is ridiculous to talk of socialism."¹ The founders of Marxism in fact believed that commodity-money relations could, as a result of socialist revolution, naturally and quietly die away inasmuch as labour would acquire a social character.² But an essential prerequisite for this conclusion was the premise about a more or less simultaneous victory of the revolution in all or a large number of civilised countries, which circumstance would from the outset have ensured the stability of the new system and "removed" many of the difficulties which had confronted Soviet power. On the other hand, Marx and Engels, unlike the social-reformist Kautsky-type leaders of the Second International,³ regarded abolition of commodity-money relations not so much as an objective of socialism, but rather as its by-product. In their opinion such a form of commodity-money relations as the credit and banking system was compatible with and useful for socialist construction.⁴ In the period of War Communism, Lenin and the Party did not ask themselves in what relation the economy would stand to the market, to trade.⁵

But this did not mean that in his practical activity the head of the Soviet Government did not use the levers of commodity-money relations to promote the interests of the new state. He repeated his appeal to gain control over the banking system many times after the assumption of power and demanded among other things "to go on steadfastly

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, p. 138.

² See K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 17-18.

³ Kautsky had only one view of the connection between commodity production and private ownership. In a work written at the beginning of the century which the Social-Democrats regarded as a classic, he said: "Commodity production presupposes private ownership; it makes futile any attempt to abolish it."

⁴ See K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, Moscow, 1971, p. 607.

⁵ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 89.

towards forming the banks into nodal points of public accounting under socialism..."¹ This quotation alone bears out that being a realistic politician Lenin was reluctant to make any conjectures in connection with the narrowing of the sphere of commodity-money relations resulting from his critique of the "Leftists'" maximalistic plans and anti-commodity conceptions.

Yet these conceptions rapidly gained ground immediately after the October Revolution. As early as the spring of 1918, "Left Communists" proposed prompt legislation to abolish commodity relations, withdraw money from circulation and turn directly to communist production and distribution.

These Leftist views were presented in their final form in *The Economy of the Transition Period* written by N. Bukharin, their ideologue, who defended economic voluntarism and characterised such categories of political economy as commodity, price and wages as "imaginary values". And he even asserted that the "social regulator fully replaces" commodity relations.

It should be noted that in formulating his conception, the "Leftist" Bukharin followed the scholastic concepts of socialism entertained by Kautsky and persons upholding his views. Therefore Lenin's sharp criticism of Bukharin's book should be put on the same plane with his devastating castigation of the similarly scholastic ideas propounded by the opportunist Kautsky.

In its Programme adopted in 1919 the Bolshevik Party proclaimed a striving "for equal pay for any work, and complete communism". And although it noted the impossibility of attaining this equality "at the present moment", it considered higher remuneration to specialists and bonuses for the most successful, particularly organisational, work as the only permissible deviation from the principle of equality but only "for

¹ Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 252.

some time".¹ Lenin considered such forms of material incentive most important and tried to have them implemented. In January 1918, for example, at his insistence the order of the People's Commissar for Railways, M. T. Yelizarov, introducing equal pay for railway workers of various qualifications and engineers was repealed.² But inflation and the steady decline in the supply of commodities reduced to naught the real purpose of the existing formal differentiation in remuneration, including the payment of bonuses. Now the decisive role was played by payment in kind, for which the state assumed responsibility, but in fact to an insufficient extent due to its exceptionally scanty resources. By 1921 payment in kind accounted for 93 per cent of the total sum of wages paid to factory and office workers.

In the first half of 1921 the average wage of a qualified worker was a mere two per cent higher than payment in kind received by an unskilled worker.

Although in terms of money the average wage of engineering and technical personnel was several times higher than that of the workers, inflation also reduced the difference to naught since the rations of the specialists were smaller, so that their real wages also proved to be smaller than those received by the workers.

The levelling nature of payment in kind combined with the class principle under which the population was divided into categories for purposes of supply. The first category included manual workers who were entitled to slightly bigger food rations; the second included mental workers and office employees; the third consisted of persons of the private sector who did not exploit the labour of others. The state supply system did not cover people who exploited the work of others. Higher rations were issued to children and sick people and also certain

¹ *GPSU in Resolutions...*, Vol. 2, p. 52.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 499, 575.

categories of specialists. The piece-rate system was introduced at munition factories where the workers already received bonuses and higher rations, which served to stimulate production.

The expropriation from the bourgeoisie of private property was an important element of economic equality and justice. The expropriation took the form of extraordinary taxes and contributions imposed on the propertied urban strata. And yet already in the spring of 1918, at the time of an uncompromising struggle against the bourgeoisie, Lenin was thinking over the question of introducing a progressive income tax.

On the other hand, the decree on large-scale nationalisation of industry promulgated on June 28, 1918, made it incumbent on the former industrialists, in conformity with Lenin's line of achieving genuine socialisation, to continue administering the industrial enterprises pending individual instructions. In spite of the appeals of the "Left Communists" for overall nationalisation, the majority of the small factories and artisan workshops remained in private hands.

In spite of the fact that the levelling system was nourished by poverty, it helped to attain one of the main objectives of the fight for a new, just social system based on genuine equality, "to do away with ... the habit of looking upon work merely as a duty, and of considering rightful only that work which is paid for at a certain rate",¹ objectives that were altruistic and most humane. It is that aspect of the Bolsheviks' struggle that even such confirmed anti-communists as the well-known historian George Kennan cannot pass over in silence. In an article on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution he wrote that the first typical factor basic to understanding the great transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat was the "essential altruism of purpose that

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 124.

underlay this revolution", and went on to say that "*the outlook that inspired the Bolsheviks and brought them finally to power was founded on an understandable desire to correct these (inherent in capitalist society. — Y. A.) anomalies, to eliminate social injustice and economic exploitation, to assure to the servant of the machine the comfort, security, dignity of status and sense of community...*

"...This was ... a noble dream, supported by a great earnestness of purpose, and pursued by thousands and tens of thousands of people in Russia, including many of the Bolsheviks, with a selfless dedication that has few parallels in the history of our time."¹

Thoroughly anti-bourgeois in spirit, the first Soviet Constitution adopted in July 1918 proclaimed the principle "He who does not work, neither shall he eat". It confirmed labour conscription (proclaimed in January 1918) "with a view to abolishing the parasitic social strata and economic organisation" (Article 3).² Those who did not work, i.e., the propertied sections, were obliged to perform unskilled work (logging, street-sweeping and so on). And although some time later the code of labour laws stipulated that all able-bodied citizens had the right to work according to their vocation and be remunerated, practically the entire able-bodied population, including qualified specialists, performed unskilled work whenever the situation warranted this step. Labour was militarised. Working people in various industries and of all professions were declared mobilised. Military discipline was enforced at industrial enterprises and wilful absence from work was qualified as desertion. In January 1920, in connection with a brief breathing spell in the hostilities, many large military units were temporarily reorganised into "labour

¹ *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967, pp. 8-9.

² *History of the Soviet Constitution (in Documents)*, Moscow, 1957, p. 143 (in Russian).

armies" which performed the most important public jobs. The organisation of "labour armies", on the one hand, and the introduction of martial law at key state enterprises, on the other, was viewed not only as a means of solving urgent state tasks, but also as a form of the self-education of the proletariat, as a way of fostering proletarian, communist consciousness among the petty-bourgeois masses. In this way the "labour armies" and labour conscription were put on the same plane with the communist *subbotniks* and constituted, as Lenin put it, diverse forms of socialist and communist labour.¹

The first communist *subbotnik* (from the Russian *subбота* meaning Saturday) took place on the night of Saturday, April 12, 1919, when a group of railway workers, members of the Communist Party, at the Moscow Marshalling Yard worked 10 hours without pay and repaired three locomotives. This initiative was taken up by Communists at other Moscow enterprises and then by broad sections of working people, including non-Party members. In 1920 the movement assumed nation-wide proportions. *Subbotniks* carried a great propaganda impact, and, incidentally, helped the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky to evolve the "formula" of socialism—"free labour of freely gathered people".

This also meant that the organisation of labour, the entire labour process was looked upon not only as the function of state power, but also as a result of the creative energy of the masses. For that reason Lenin at one and the same time recognised the need to militarise labour in view of the civil war and called for the extensive introduction of the methods of extending democracy, activity of the masses, their participation in production management, of developing emulation, etc., that had yielded the best practical results. That accounted for the fact that in the course of the discussion on the trade unions in 1920,

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol. 30, p. 517.

Lenin opposed Trotsky's anti-democratic platform and backed Rudzutak's theses opposing the perpetuation of the statist militarisation of labour.

Insofar as the system of War Communism did not basically stem from economic stimulation of production, the state of the latter depended on the revolutionary self-sacrifice of the working people and the Soviet Government's decisive measures to draw people into labour activity. In spite of the powerful revolutionary enthusiasm, production did not rise, but on the contrary, declined chiefly because of the war and its direct consequences, economic dislocation, disorganisation and disruption of economic ties. By the end of the summer of 1918, i.e., prior to the outbreak of crucial battles of the civil war, about 40 per cent of industrial enterprises in the country had come to a standstill. A large part of the workers had left for the frontlines and many had moved to the villages where the food situation was less critical.

The policy of abolishing trade and levelling distribution could not on its own accord ensure the supply of the consumers and do away with commodity exchange. For this to happen there had to be the necessary economic and social conditions. The peasants hoarded farm products "for a rainy day" and also to exchange them for manufactured goods; on their part, too, the urban population preferred to exchange the small quantity of manufactured goods and valuables which still remained in their possession for food on the market. Although officially outlawed the black market continued to exist. At the height of War Communism, Lenin pointed out that the urban population received only a half of the bread required from state agencies (People's Commissariat for Food), having to purchase the other half in the black market.¹

Veteran Bolshevik M. G. Roshal who held responsible

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 568; Vol. 30, p. 111.

economic posts in Kazan in those days recalled: "Sometimes the peasants' produce escaped the control of the Gubernia Economic Council. Only a small proportion of products was delivered by order, while the rest found its way to the market where it was sold at speculative prices."¹ The blackmarketeers supplied towns with a good half of the amount of grain they needed, and this at a time when the policy of War Communism was at its height.

In that period, however, it was generally believed that an end could be put to the private property elements by means of a rigid military organisation. And yet it also proved necessary to deviate from the communist principles of distribution: for instance, each proletarian was allowed to lay in 24 kilograms of grain (primarily by exchanging manufactured goods in the countryside). This permission was in violation of the decree on grain monopoly. The Government also permitted for a certain period of time the free marketing of individual food products, although at fixed prices, by abolishing its monopoly over them. But no one actually sold them at fixed prices. On the whole, the levelling of payment in kind under War Communism was, as stated above, the only possible way of saving the basic proletarian cadres and the urban population as a whole from starvation.

ANTI-BOURGEOIS MEASURES IN POLITICS

In the political sphere Lenin and the Party resolutely and openly opposed the fetishism of parliamentary-type bourgeois-democratic institutions. The latter could have been left if their activity had been in line with the interests of the revolutionary proletariat, but since they

¹ M. G. Roshal, *Notes From the Past*, Moscow, 1969, p. 136 (in Russian).

acted against these interests they were to be abolished. The powerful and in many respects spontaneous movement of the masses awakened by the revolution did not fit traditional state and legal forms; furthermore, in view of the then low cultural level of the masses these forms were advantageous to the bourgeoisie and therefore could not have been effectively used by the working people. This being the case, bourgeois-democratic institutions which were an obstacle to the revolution had lost their right to existence. It should also be borne in mind that in contrast to the advanced Western countries Russia had no firmly established traditions of parliamentary democracy and the latter's death in incipency was not regarded as a loss by the masses.

The post-revolutionary developments were fresh proof of the fact that not a single great revolution ever fetters itself with the preceding forms of authority and administration. The Parliament which emerged in the course of the English revolution of the 17th century had very little in common with the former English Parliament. The French Constituent Assembly of 1789, having broken away from representatives of the nobility and the clergy, challenged the principles of formal democracy inasmuch as it barred these two social estates from parliamentary representation. And the structure of authority of the Jacobin dictatorship—the Committee of Public Salvation backed by the Convention—was totally unlike this Constituent Assembly, not to mention the English Parliament which many people regarded as the embodiment of the democratic traditions.

The state and political views of the Bolsheviks were mirrored in concentrated form in the first Soviet Constitution. The proclamation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry (which does not exploit the labour of others and continuously resorts to the sale of at least part of its labour power¹) and the direct

¹ See *History of the Soviet Constitution*, p. 145.

removal of the propertied classes from participation in state development and administration rang out as a challenge to the hypocritically respectable bourgeois world.

In his theses on Soviet power Lenin characterised it in the following words: "...Union and organisation of the working and exploited masses oppressed by capitalism, and only them, i.e., only the workers and poor peasantry, semi-proletarians, with automatic exclusion of the exploiting classes and rich representatives of the petty bourgeoisie..."¹ The inherent democracy of the Soviets was now accompanied by legal restrictions which could not have happened in the course of the revolution. This simply had to happen because upon losing "their own" organs of power the propertied strata began to search for ways to infiltrate the Soviets and undermine them from within. Taking account of the situation that had emerged prior to the October Revolution, the 1918 Constitution provided for unequal representation in higher Soviet bodies of the peasantry and the urban proletariat in favour of the latter. In this way the peasant "channel" by means of which the bourgeoisie could penetrate the Soviets was narrowed to a considerable degree. Under the Constitution, people living on unearned income, particularly rentiers and traders, and also people who had worked in the former government's repressive machinery were legally disfranchised. It was then that the scornful word "disfranchised" appeared. But the number of disfranchised people was small: during the 1922 election campaign they accounted for 5 per cent of the adult population in towns and less than one per cent in the countryside.

Initially it was thought that the Soviets would combine legislative and executive power, thus putting an end to parliamentarism, and would be elected by production, economic cells, above all by industrial enterprises. This

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 154.

placed not only political, but also economic functions within their competence and led the working masses closer to the state apparatus. The Constitution and the accompanying interpretation were aimed at drawing all working people into the work of state administration. On top of that each member of a Soviet was responsible for a specific sector of work and not less than twice a month reported back to the electorate; if he failed to fulfil these duties his mandate was withdrawn. Such an approach to the formation and the functioning of the Soviets, it seemed, allowed for abolishing bureaucracy.

The Soviets were also regarded as the embodiment of local self-government. The Programme of the Bolshevik Party adopted in 1919 stated that in the Soviet state local and regional self-government without any officials appointed from the top was effected on an incomparably broader scale than anywhere else in the world. The note to Article 57 of the Constitution saying that the general meeting of electors ("in those rural areas where it shall be deemed possible") as the highest authority in the localities reminds one of the agora in Ancient Greece.

The first Soviet Constitution envisaged the possibility of restricting the proclaimed rights in the interests of the revolution. Article 23 reads: "In conformity with the interests of the working class as a whole, the RSFSR shall deprive individuals and individual groups of those rights which they exercise to the detriment of the interests of the socialist revolution."¹

The restrictions of formal democracy proclaimed in the 1918 Constitution were dictated by the specific historic conditions in the Russia of those years. "We do not at all regard the question of disfranchising the bourgeoisie from an absolute point of view," Lenin noted in 1919, "because it is theoretically quite conceivable that the dictatorship of the proletariat may suppress the bourgeoisie at

¹ See *History of Soviet Constitution*, pp. 147, 153.

every step without disfranchising them. This is theoretically quite conceivable. Nor do we propose our Constitution as a model for other countries."¹ This observation was made at the height of the civil war. But already then it was clear that Lenin regarded the dictatorship of the proletariat as a decisive step towards genuine democracy, and by no means as an antipode of democracy. In his view the dictatorship of the proletariat was the only possible weapon of the revolutionary struggle against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie which was the substance of the political system opposing revolutionary Russia, irrespective of the level of development of formal democracy. The historical superiority of the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeois system, as he saw it, lay in the fact that it was the first to put the actual equality of all working people into effect, practically and not merely formally ensured the rights of citizens, provided them with genuine guarantees and drew the working people into the administration of the state. Taking all this into account Lenin noted: "... A higher type of democracy is being put into effect in the Soviet Republic."²

Thus, it was the dictatorship of the proletariat versus the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. But while in the Russia of that period the dictatorship could not but suppress all opposition forces, the revolutionary struggle in the contemporary capitalist world which is being conducted in different conditions thanks to the impact of the Russian revolution and its consequences, the emergence of the socialist orientation of the rule of the working class and its allies, that is, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, is, judging by everything, taking place in conditions of the preservation and respect for universal suffrage, parliament, multi-party system and other democratic institutions, which became democratic thanks to the efforts of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 184.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

the revolutionary working class and communist movement in countries concerned.

This being the case, it would be wrong to counterpose dictatorship—the class *substance* of any state authority—to democracy—a *form* of political authority—clearly an *inherent feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat* and one which develops as the working masses rally ever closer around the working class. That is why the genuine dictatorship of the proletariat naturally develops into a state of the whole people. As far as the enemies of socialism—the anti-communists—are concerned, this *contraposition is deliberate distortion*, whereas among the sincere democrats it is an error of terminology. The latter confuse the theoretical conception which crystallised when Marxism was just beginning to emerge, with its verbal embodiment, which may vary in different countries depending on their internal conditions. Explaining why they reject the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” those who adhere to this position say that the masses identify the word “dictatorship” with the methods of reactionary regimes. Perhaps this is so, but it should be borne in mind that the dictatorship of the *proletariat* has a totally different meaning. Addressing the 7th Congress of the French Communist Party in 1964 Georges Marchais, now its General Secretary, called upon the delegates to turn down the proposal of a Party cell to strike out the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” from the Party Programme, and justly noted: “It would have been a grave mistake to abandon the principle and the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat... The dictatorship of the proletariat is not the dictatorship of the minority over the majority... The dictatorship of the proletariat is democracy for all the working people, that is, for the overwhelming majority.”¹

¹ *Cahiers du communisme*, juin-juillet 1964, numéro spécial, pp. 294-95.

From the first days of the revolution Lenin and the Bolshevik Party made it known that in the interests and on behalf of the working class they employed and would continue to employ violence against the exploiters and the enemies of the revolution and even against oppositional groups within the working class itself. It could not have been otherwise, inasmuch as the revolution itself amounted to violence not regulated by law. Lenin underlined that revolutionary power must wield authority and possess real strength which it would not hesitate to employ its self-defence. “No revolution is worth anything,” he wrote, “unless it can defend itself.”¹ Many observers believe that the recent Chilean tragedy proves this point.

There were times in the civil war when the socialist revolution in Russia used its strength in the most rigid forms. But these forms were in effect imposed on the revolution by its enemies. In this connection it would be interesting to recall the words of the famous British writer H. G. Wells who visited Russia in 1920: “It was not communism that plunged this huge, creaking, bankrupt empire into six years of exhausting war. It was European imperialism. Nor is it communism that has pestered this suffering and perhaps dying Russia with a series of subsidised raids, invasions, and insurrections, and inflicted upon her an atrocious blockade. The vindictive French creditor, the journalistic British oaf, are far more responsible for these deathbed miseries than any communist.”²

On the other hand, the Soviet form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which with the help of all the available means managed to uphold in the exceptionally difficult conditions the world's first socialist state, at the same time created conditions that subsequently enabled other countries which had taken the socialist path to achieve

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 124.

² H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, London, pp. 27-28.

their objectives with smaller sacrifices and less exertion of energy.

And yet the Bolsheviks were by no means apologists of extreme measures. After the decisive battles of the civil war had been fought and before it had come to an end, the Soviet Government abolished the death penalty. Lenin who had earlier demanded the employment of the severest measures not only against overt counter-revolutionaries, but also against bribetakers and marauders, now declared: "We say that the use of violence arises from the need to crush the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists. When this is accomplished we shall renounce all extraordinary measures."¹

However resolute and harsh the policy of War Communism may have been, Lenin and his associates, even in the most tense periods, maintained the view that the lofty revolutionary aims should not be besmirched by brutal, man-hating methods. In this connection an episode recounted in her *Reminiscences* by veteran member of Bolshevik Party Y. D. Stasova who at the time acted as Secretary of the Petrograd Party organisation is worthy of attention. Addressing a meeting of the Petrograd Party activists convened immediately after the assassination, on August 30, 1918, of one of the leaders of the organisation, M. S. Uritsky, by an SR terrorist, G. Y. Zinoviev declared that it was necessary to take "appropriate measures"; he proposed, in particular, that "all workers should be allowed to wreak vengeance on the intelligentsia right in the street". A discomfited silence descended on the meeting. "Thereupon," continued Stasova, "I took the floor and said that in my opinion Zinoviev's proposal had been inspired by a feeling of panic.... Evidently my words loosened tongues because other speakers agreed with me and finally the meeting adopted a decision to set up special groups consisting of three persons in each

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 327-28.

district to track down counter-revolutionary elements."¹

It would have been ridiculous to paint the Russian, as any other revolution for that matter, in pink and blue colours. It was not without its horrors, tragedies, plunder and violence. It stirred up the lower sections of society which, after decades if not centuries of torpor and semi-slavish existence, naturally could not immediately turn into conscious builders of the new society. The great Russian poet Alexander Blok in an article entitled *Intelligentsia in the Revolution*, castigating those intellectuals who retreated in fear of the revolution, wrote: "What did you think? That the revolution is an idyll? That creativity never destroys anything in its way? That the people is an obedient child? That hundreds of rogues, provocateurs, Black Hundreders, people who are not averse to lining their pockets would not try to avail themselves of what lies in temptation's way? And, finally that the age-old discord between the 'lowborn' and the 'highborn', between the 'educated' and the 'uneducated', between the intelligentsia and the people would be resolved 'bloodlessly' and 'painlessly'?"²

Under the specific conditions of the Russian revolution the function of violence, the suppression of the exploiting classes in a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat played a very important role which became decisive in the period of War Communism. In the final count the very fact that it was easier to begin a revolution in Russia than in the West, but more difficult to accomplish it, determined its higher cost.

Lenin was by no means a sentimental liberal. But his revolutionary firmness did not prevent him from realising that excessive employment of extreme measures could have been detrimental to the revolution. He was for

¹ Y. D. Stasova, *Reminiscences*, Moscow, 1969, p. 225 (in Russian).

² A. A. Blok, *Works in two Volumes*, Moscow, 1955, Vol. 2, pp. 51-52 (in Russian).

violence against the bourgeois *class* which came out against the revolution, and at the same time severely condemned all arbitrary acts and infringements upon human dignity sometimes committed by local authorities. A defender of the dictatorship of the proletariat, he simply could not tolerate despotism. He likewise thought that in other countries revolutions would take place in conditions less grim than in Russia, without the violence and bloodshed imposed on Russia by the imperialists and that the working class in other countries would come to power along another, more humane path.¹ Even during the most critical period of the civil war he would underline that the main content of the dictatorship of the proletariat was that of building a new society. This work could not be accomplished without destruction, without clearing the ground for the construction site, without those frequently tragic excesses characteristic of any great revolution, but which do not detract from its greatness.

THE INEVITABILITY OF CENTRALISATION

In order to wage an armed struggle against the enemy the state had to concentrate all its resources in its own hands and ensure the strictest centralisation of their distribution so that they could be used first and foremost to meet the needs of the front. In these circumstances economic development was naturally out of the question. In those years the main thing was to concentrate all efforts on the achievement of military objectives. Nationalisation continued at a forced pace, and when the civil war was drawing to an end the Supreme Economic Council decreed the nationalisation of enterprises which employed more than 5-10 people. This meant that the state would take over not only medium, but many small industrial enter-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 270, 271.

prises and artisan workshops (incidentally, this decree was not carried out in full). This meant, among other things, that the development of state capitalism on which Lenin had calculated shortly after the revolution, came to a stop in the period of War Communism.

Furthermore, it was necessary to organise the work of the central administrative and economic apparatus, placing all local enterprises and institutions under its control. Earlier Lenin had formulated the following thought which was fully translated into practice during the period of War Communism: "Communism requires and presupposes the greatest possible centralisation of large-scale production throughout the country. The all-Russia centre, therefore, should definitely be given the right of direct control over all the enterprises of the given branch of industry. The regional centres define their functions depending on local conditions of life, etc., in accordance with general production directions and decisions of the centre."¹ The war situation more and more imperatively demanded the organisation of accounting and control, and a regulated, centralised organisation of labour as a whole.

Practical steps in this direction naturally clashed with the interpretation of Soviet power in the localities as self-sufficing communes which resolved all economic issues according to their own line of thinking. Not only general, but all day-to-day economic management was concentrated in the hands of the Supreme Economic Council and its main and central boards located in Moscow. By 1920 there were more than fifty such boards, which directly, over the head of the economic councils, guided the enterprises and undividedly disposed of their output and resources. Enterprises were completely stripped of economic and financial independence. They received fuel, raw and other materials free of charge from the "top" and delivered all their output in line with orders from the "top" also

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 96.

free of charge. Economic councils in effect became economic departments under the local Soviets. The People's Commissariat for Food was assigned the duty of ensuring the centralised supply of the population with essential manufactures as well as with food. Thus, the formally preserved territorial system of economic management was pushed into the background, while vertical administration came to play a decisive role. Workers' control was now exercised not by individual bodies of workers but indirectly, through the proletarian state.

The establishment of centralised administration also meant the replacement of collective leadership by one-man management. This fact manifested itself in the first place in that representatives of the central authority assigned to the localities were invested with authority which was frequently unlimited, so that they were even named dictators (railway, food, etc.). Furthermore, it manifested itself in that only one person, responsible to the central authority, was placed in charge of each enterprise. The collective factory committees and factory boards which formerly administered the nationalised enterprises turned into advisory bodies under the director. Decisions could be worked out collectively, but in wartime conditions decision-making was the job of the person directly in charge of the enterprise. "Committee discussion," Lenin believed, "must be reduced to an absolute minimum and never be allowed to interfere with swiftness of decision or minimise the responsibility of each and every worker."¹ The development of orientation towards one-man management also transformed the economic role of the trade unions. In view of their very nature the trade unions could not ensure effective economic guidance, and consequently could not assume the functions of state authority.

On the other hand, the Communist Party's Programme adopted in 1919, when War Communism was at its height, orientated the trade unions on shifting from participation in

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 142.

management to concentrating the management of the entire national economy in their hands. Circumstances were such, however, that this intention proved to be unrealistic.

The centralisation of management was also reflected in the idea of single economic development plan, which, as we have already mentioned, had been formulated immediately after the October Revolution. Although the military situation ruled out the implementation of such a plan, Lenin and the Party did not give up the idea. And when a short respite set in in the fighting at the beginning of 1920, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee passed a decision which stated that it was now possible "to begin a more balanced economic development and scientific elaboration and consistent implementation of a state plan for the entire national economy".¹ At the same time a state commission of specialists was set up on Lenin's proposal to draw up a plan for the electrification of Russia (GOELRO). The plan was approved by the Eighth Congress of Soviets in December 1920, at which Lenin announced his famous formula: "*Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.*"² Here we should like to note that in those years electrification was regarded as the main form of technological progress and the basis of industrial development.

The policy of rigid centralisation, however, began to relax somewhat as of the end of 1919. Broader economic rights were granted to local organs of authority and less important enterprises were placed under their control. The Ninth Party Congress (March-April 1920) decided, "while preserving and developing vertical centralism on the level of central boards, to combine it with the horizontal subordination of enterprises within the economic areas".³

¹ *From the History of the Plan for the Electrification of the Soviet Land*, Moscow, 1962, p. 137 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 516.

³ CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 2, p. 155.

BOURGEOIS SPECIALISTS IN THE SERVICE OF THE REVOLUTION

However harshly Lenin may have criticised the anti-Soviet sentiments and attitudes of that portion of the intelligentsia which, being bourgeois or petty-bourgeois in its majority, was opposed to Soviet power, he resolutely disagreed with the stand of the "Left Communists" who totally precluded the possibility of co-operating with the intelligentsia; he envisaged that eventually a larger part of the intelligentsia would turn from hostility to Bolsheviks to neutrality and then to supporting them. Furthermore, there were plans to use in the interests of the revolution even those specialists from among the intellectuals who were still opposed to Soviet power. "... It is now an immediate, ripe and essential task," Lenin wrote, "to draw the bourgeois intelligentsia into our work."¹ Never before in the history of the class struggle of the proletariat and Marxist theoretical thought such issues even cropped up.

Clearly all this meant that it would be necessary to combat such a nihilistic attitude to the intelligentsia and the biased attitude of a part of the revolutionary masses which spread their class hatred for the propertied elements to all mental workers, all the more so because the majority of the latter at first refused to accept the October Revolution.

It also implied the ideological remoulding of the intelligentsia itself by means of patiently impressing upon it that the revolution pursued humane, progressive aims. It is this line which became the substance of the Party's policy towards the intelligentsia in that period. Accordingly Lenin summoned the Communists to create "an environment of comradely collaboration" for bourgeois specialists, and give them an "opportunity of working in better condi-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 214.

tions than they did under capitalism..."¹ He was not against coercion when it was absolutely necessary but warned that it was impossible "to compel a whole section of the population to work under coercion".²

As time passed ever broader circles of the intelligentsia came to realise that Soviet power had come to stay. A great change occurred in their minds, opening their eyes to the greatness of the October Revolution, the awakening of the people, who embodied in the revolution their striving for a better life, the significance of the Bolshevik policy and its genuine conformity with the interests of the people and the country. Many specialists stopped sabotaging Soviet power's measures and joined its efforts to build a new social system.³ Accordingly the Party's attitude towards the specialists became less harsh. The Ninth Party Congress worked out the following "dualistic" form of economic management: "... director-administrator from among experienced workers ... with an ability ... among other things, to draw specialists, technicians, engineers into work; under him, and as his technical assistant, an engineer", or "an engineer-specialist possessing the necessary qualifications as the factual head of an enterprise and under him a commissar from among experienced workers..."⁴ This model, as we shall see below, proved to be effective during the period of NEP, too.

Most consistently this policy of co-operation was pursued with regard to the military intelligentsia—the officers—since in view of the situation the greatest attention was devoted to the army. By August 1920 nearly 50,000 former tsarist officers, including generals, held commanding posts in the Red Army. Many of them went through the civil war and after that played a prominent

¹ Ibid., Vol. 29, pp. 179-80.

² Ibid.

³ For details see S. A. Fedyukin, *The Great October Revolution and the Intelligentsia*, Moscow, 1976.

⁴ CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 2, p. 157.

part in the development of the Soviet Armed Forces. Suffice it to recall the names of Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic S. S. Kamenev and J. J. Vacićis, Marshals of the Soviet Union M. N. Tukhachevsky, A. I. Yegorov, B. M. Shaposhnikov, A. M. Vasilevsky and I. K. Bagramyan. The employment of specialists in this and other fields was an essential factor which enabled Soviet power to win the civil war and subsequently make gigantic strides in economic development. True, a military commissar who was a member of the Party was attached to each commander to control his activity. And there were cases when a commissar by the authority invested in him by the revolution removed the commander from his post. But more often than not the two-in-one "commander-commissar" command fused into a single whole, with the commander acquiring revolutionary consciousness and the commissar military professionalism. On the other hand, the revolution itself promoted from among the midst of the people brilliant military leaders such as former non-commissioned officers V. K. Blucher, S. M. Budyonny and former fitter K. Y. Voroshilov.

The "ascertainment of principles" in the army found its expression not only in the employment of old military specialists, but also in the revision of the methods of its organisation. Raised on the basis of voluntariness and electivity of the commanders, the revolutionary Red Army played its positive role by repulsing the first attacks of the interventionists; but very soon it began to display a dangerous tendency towards disintegration into separate, essentially partisan detachments with all the inherent partisan features—fragmentation of forces, anarchism and even a certain degree of adventurism. Therefore it was decided to build up the Red Army as a regular armed force on the basis of universal military service. In March 1919 an order was issued in keeping with which commanders were appointed from the top instead of being elected. The Bolshevik Party's policy of building up a regular,

disciplined army played an important role in drawing experienced military specialists into the service. The petty-bourgeois Menshevik and SR parties and also "Left Communists" accused the Bolshevik leadership of departing from the classical Marxist principle of a "people's militia". But it was the regular Red Army that smashed the troops of the interventionists and the White armies, and safeguarded Soviet Russia.

At the same time the proclaimed class principle of the formation of the Red Army was being carried out: only workers and peasants who did not exploit the labour of others were subject to military training, while universal military service did not extend to the bourgeoisie.

The orientation towards one-man management and the employment of bourgeois specialists encountered the opposition of the "Left Communists", who maintained that this approach clashed with the socialist character of Soviet power. One of the "Left Communists", Osinsky, even identified one-man management with "hierarchical and authoritarian forms of dictatorship".¹ The Right-wing, Menshevik, opposition went along with the "Left Communists". Menshevik I. A. Isuv, for example, alleged that Lenin's policy of reorganising industrial management "threatens to deprive the proletariat of its basic economic gains and turn it into a victim of unrestrained bourgeois exploitation".² Later, at the Ninth Bolshevik Party Congress, the fairly powerful "Democratic Centralism" faction³ opposed Lenin's principle of one-man management.

¹ See *Uoproty istorii KPSS*, 1969, No. 3, p. 67.

² *Uperyod*, April 25, 1918.

³ Democratic Centralists (Decists)—a group which took shape in 1919-1920 out of the remnants of the "Left Communists" faction. Its members favoured freedom of factions and groupings in the Bolshevik Party, which would have lent it the semblance of bourgeois and social-reformist parties; proposed weakening the Party's leading role in the Soviets and trade unions. Members of that group were expelled from the Party at the 15th Congress in 1927.

"...In a workers' and peasants' republic there should be collective management," said Democratic Centralist K. K. Yurenev.¹

Strange as it may seem, these assertions, of which time itself has demonstrated the erroneousness, are being repeated by modern ultra-Left-wingers in the West. For instance, the well-known French economist Charles Bettelheim who has succumbed to Maoist influence interprets Lenin's policy of enlisting the services of specialists as allegedly attesting to "a large bourgeois presence" in the state apparatus and the formation of a "state bourgeoisie".²

They ignore the simple fact that all responsible posts in the state apparatus were held by representatives of the working class and its Party, so that the specialists (who, as we have already mentioned, had no serious material privileges) worked under their control and therefore could not but implement the policy of this Party.

The evolution of Soviet power's relations with the bourgeois intelligentsia demonstrates the positive features of proletarian dictatorship, that its attitude to its class enemies is not confined to their suppression and that it wins over to its side whole social groups under a *bona fide* delusion.

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES OF MANAGEMENT

The aggravation of the problem of effective management and the development of centralisation as a method of its solution made itself felt above all in the activity of the Soviets. Being a profoundly progressive anti-bourgeois phenomenon, rejection of "division of powers" tended to mix up competences within the Soviets, and

¹ *Ninth Congress of the RCP(B). Minutes*, Moscow, 1960, p. 45 (in Russian).

² Charles Bettelheim, *La lutte de classes en URSS. Première période 1917-1923*, Paris, 1974, pp. 121-22, 222.

the latter circumstance, in view of the inexperience and inadequate cultural level of their personnel, often bred irresponsibility, confusion and stagnation in their activity. It was only natural and logical, therefore, that all this enhanced the role and prerogatives of the executive committees elected by the Soviets, which, under the new constitutional acts, were now subordinate not only to corresponding congresses of Soviets but also to higher executive bodies beginning with the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. Another step towards centralisation was the reorganisation of the Soviets (completed by the summer of 1918) according to the administrative-territorial principle (instead of the production principle), and also the establishment of extraordinary organs of authority in the localities—revolutionary committees which temporarily replaced the Soviets. All these measures, however, far from always eliminated the confusion of competences because for a long time it remained unclear as to who was to perform legislative functions.

The Soviets' executive committees where there was a particularly large number of Party members frequently substituted themselves for the Soviets and their congresses. This was a protective reaction of the ruling Bolshevik Party to the fact that bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements managed to infiltrate the Soviets by taking advantage of the inexperience and political naïvety of some groups of the working population and the democratic principle of election. On the other hand, practice showed that management was not as simple a matter as it had seemed before.

Here is how Lenin characterised the correction which specific Russian reality introduced into the Marxist understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat as its "direct" power: The result of the "low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government by the working people, are in fact

organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole".¹

On the other hand, the fact that executive bodies were frequently substituted for the Soviets, and Party cells for executive committees, even if at times this was dictated by considerations of revolutionary expediency, inevitably clashed with the programmatic principles of communist self-government. The Eighth Party Congress warned Party groups against mixing up their functions with those of the Soviets and against substituting the Soviets by executive committees. And yet the next Party congress noted that this was still being done. Even Lenin's critics from the left recognised the need to introduce certain "centralising" amendments into the principle of communist self-government.

Centralisation tended to swell the state apparatus. Sad as it may be, but it was precisely during the war period, when the Soviet state was in need of an economy drive, bureaucracy, already on a new soil, began to develop. To be exact, however, in those spheres of public life where the old state apparatus had been completely demolished (foreign policy, justice and so on), the political and psychological climate and the morality of the personnel were genuinely democratic. On the whole, however, the hope that bureaucracy would be swiftly suppressed, proved premature. Lenin emphasised the need to fight "against the bureaucratic distortion of the Soviet form of organisation" in his *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*.² A year later the Eighth Party Congress stated that bureaucracy was beginning to revive within the Soviet system.³

This bureaucracy did not have the "classical" features which Max Weber described as rationality, professional

training and efficiency,¹ it was a backward, Asiatic bureaucracy, a product of the conditions prevailing in Soviet Russia at that time: a low level of general culture, the dispersion of the predominantly rural society, the war and ruin which necessitated extreme centralisation; taking all these factors in account, Lenin justly characterised bureaucracy in Russia as "a legacy of the 'siege'".² It was owing to this fact that the administrative apparatus became inflated, unwieldy and inefficient. All this in no way means that centralisation in itself engenders bureaucracy. Lenin pointed out that it would be a mistake to mix up democratic centralism and bureaucracy, and considered it essential that the working people participate actively in building socialism. It is noteworthy that experienced Party workers in the localities, where they wielded enormous authority, not only did not become bureaucrats but, on the contrary, built up large groups of activists consisting of advanced workers and peasants as a democratic counterpoise to bureaucracy.

Almost all of the advanced workers and professional revolutionaries who had been assigned to the state apparatus in the first months following the establishment of Soviet power went to the front, where many of them were killed. Lenin acknowledged with bitterness that "the section of workers who are governing is inordinately, incredibly *small*".³ It was a great help, of course, that those sections of the working people who acquired an education in the course of the cultural revolution could be promoted to leading posts. It was necessary to give young Party members who were closely connected with the broad sections of the people greater access to the state apparatus; to give them the right to control over the old employees so that they could learn while exercising this control; to give

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 183.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 275.

³ See *CPSU in Resolutions* . . . , Vol. 2, p. 45.

¹ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, 1922, SS. 650-78.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 352.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 183.

them a chance to display their abilities and prove their worth in handling responsible jobs. And yet the "new-comers" lacked adequate professional training. That presumably accounted for the fact that Lenin considered it possible to draw all working people into the administration of the state only by means of "a series of gradual measures ... carefully selected and unfailingly implemented".¹

A decision was taken to set up "industrial administration courses" at large enterprises for the best workers in order to train them in production management. In 1920 the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection with a ramified network of local branches was established with a view to extending the control of the working people over the state apparatus and teaching them the art of management. The ideal was to ensure that the entire working population should learn to work in the bodies of this commissariat. Already in the first half of 1921 approximately 90,000 people worked at different times in them and in assistance cells.

The main thing was that the Party, while retaining its political leadership, should maintain its unity with the masses, setting them an example by its social behaviour and seeking neither a privileged nor an elitist status. It was absolutely necessary to purge the Party and the state apparatus of bureaucrats who, while professing loyalty to Soviet power, abused their official status to further their selfish interests. The Eighth All-Russia Conference of the RCP(B) (December 1919) demanded that all Party members, whatever their official status, occupation or education, should take part in both public physical labour (*subbotniks* and *voskresniks*, including heavy manual work), and management, passing from the simplest, say, militia and office duties to production control right up to and including work in the state apparatus.

¹ Ibid., p. 109.

The principle was proclaimed of systematic renewal of state officials and alternation of administrative work with physical labour in the production sphere.

Regarding bureaucracy as one of the main enemies of the revolution Lenin and the Party could not let the struggle against bureaucracy undermine the efficiency of management ensured by adequate centralisation which was achieved through much bitter experience and guaranteed the existence and development of the Soviet state. It was with good reason that in his criticism of the "Democratic Centralists" at the Ninth Party Congress Lenin said that there was "not a trace of anything practical or businesslike"¹ in their theses. And still earlier, thinking over the reasons for the weakness of the organisational aspect of the matter, Lenin made a note for himself that regrettably "the slogan of practical ability and business-like methods has enjoyed little popularity among revolutionaries".²

The reasons lay in the specific climate of the first revolutionary months—in the passion for the destructive aspect of the revolution, in the belief that all constructive problems would be solved by themselves, without painstaking day-to-day work. This climate is inherent in many revolutions; it was not by accident that decades after, in characterising the greatness and difficulties of the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara noted that the masses were prepared to die for the revolution, but not to work for it. It was this climate that created a natural sensation that revolution was a "holiday"; but if this sensation became preponderant and overshadowed the constructive aims which could be attained only by intensive work, it led to fruitless ultra-revolutionarism.

Finally, it was necessary to build up management on scientific foundations, for that was the sole guarantee of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 466.

² Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 213.

its efficiency. In his works written in that period Lenin frequently mentioned the need to reduce the state apparatus and abolish duplication and excessive accounting, and the importance of implementing the latest Western managerial methods. But in order to accomplish all this it was necessary to take advantage of even the minutest opportunity to place political and general culture within the reach of the formerly illiterate masses. That was why Lenin's famous appeal to the delegates of the Third Congress of the Komsomol which took place during the civil war was perfectly logical, although it did come as a surprise to many. He summoned young people to study in order to enrich their minds with "all those facts that are indispensable to the well-educated man of today".¹ Lenin particularly emphasised the importance of technical education essential for the industrialisation of the country "on a modern basis, in accordance with the last world in science".²

All measures taken to improve the administration of the state and society show that the country's leaders were aware that the class content of power and the efficiency of management were two different issues. The October Revolution and the establishment of a socialist state signified a giant leap forward in the history of mankind. Yet the general progressive nature of the new system did not automatically guarantee its rational functioning. "...The art of administration," Lenin said, "does not descend from heaven, it is not inspired by the Holy Ghost. And the fact that a class is the leading class does not make it at once capable of administering."³

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 288.

² *Ibid.*, p. 289.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, p. 457.

THE VICISSITUDES OF WAR COMMUNISM IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

We have already seen how, in connection with the Decree on Land, the Bolshevik Party, while considering that agriculture would benefit most from large-scale social production, decided to carry out, in accordance with the wishes of the peasant masses, an equalitarian redistribution of the land, which meant a stimulation of petty commodity production, and as it happened, also kulak and capitalist production. For even if kulak farms had the same size of plots as other peasants, the fact that the kulaks had more implements and draught animals and also stocks of commodities fit to be exchanged for other goods, and finally their efficient management, shrewdness and tightfistedness enabled them, naturally not without exploitation of hired labour, to make their farms highly profitable, while the majority of other peasants lived from hand to mouth. All this stratified the countryside, but not immediately and not always into clear-cut sections.

Even before the October Revolution Lenin spoke of the need to establish special Agricultural Labourers' and Poor Peasants' Soviets in the countryside. The appearance of such Soviets would have disclosed the political differentiation of the peasantry and led to an independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat.¹ The Party, however, took into account that the Soviets which appeared in the rural areas initially united the entire peasantry, and therefore did not speed up its socio-political differentiation at once.

The Soviet Government entrusted united local land committees, which appeared prior to the October Revolution, and Peasants' Soviets to redistribute the confiscated landed estates. In other words, during the first months (right up to the summer of 1918) Soviet power in the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 292-93.

countryside relied not only on the proletariat, as it did in towns, but on the peasantry as a whole.¹ It follows, therefore, that at the outset the October Revolution in the countryside was chiefly directed against the big landowners, and consequently was bourgeois-democratic in character. This circumstance, however, did not in the least deprive it of its socialist nature, or rather potentially socialist for the peasants at the time.

The Bolshevik Party was undeviating in its determination to bring the socialist revolution to a victorious conclusion. Paradoxical as it may seem, of great help in this respect was the Decree on Land. In spite of its Narodnik essence, it included clauses which could be used for anti-bourgeois purposes: abolition of private property in land, prohibition of the sale, purchase and lease of land and exploitation of hired labour. These points were repeated and concretised in the January 1918 Decree on the Socialisation of Land which stipulated that land could only be used by those who tilled it. Here socialisation was interpreted in the peasant-equalitarian sense; a noteworthy circumstance was that representatives of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries took an active part in working out the decree. On Lenin's proposal it proclaimed the priority right of collective farms to use land and stipulated that land should be allotted in the first place to landless peasants and agricultural labourers. It also envisaged the possibility of the free alienation of livestock and implements owned by farms extensively employing hired labour, including both the landed estates and kulak farms. And although the decree did chart the way for the transformation of the countryside, this clause was not implemented in full, for it was hardly possible to ascertain exactly, to quote Lenin, "how profound the class cleavage is among the peasants, which had undoubtedly grown more profound of late as a division into agricul-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 190.

tural labourers, wage-workers and poor peasants ('semi-proletarian'), on the one hand, and wealthy and middle peasants, on the other. Such questions will be, and can be, decided only by experience".¹ The Party won the support of the countryside in the October Revolution precisely because it regarded experience and the revolutionary creativity and self-education of the masses as the supreme criterion of its political behaviour. This approach, which was both realistic and creative, was opposed by the opportunists, Kautsky for example, who blamed the Bolshevik Party for giving the peasants an opportunity of doing whatever they wanted with the land. But true Marxists-Leninists regarded this reproach as a praise.

The redistribution of the landed estates and equalitarian land tenure helped towards a certain social levelling out of the countryside where middle peasants began to prevail. Nevertheless, the social differentiation and the class struggle were not eliminated, but were rather driven inside. The poorest peasants, although they also received land, discovered that a shortage of money, implements, livestock and seeds prevented them from efficiently running their farms. Bitter and bloody clashes between the kulaks and the poor peasants became more and more frequent. Here is a short report which appeared in the *Izvestia* on April 2, 1918: "A sharp differentiation between the wealthy and the poor peasants is taking place in villages. The merciless civil war is assuming ever greater dimensions. . . . In their struggle against the kulaks the poorest peasants in the village of Smirnovo decided to resort to terror. The kulaks agreed to make concessions after 12 of them had been killed. . . ." It often happened that the poor peasants and soldiers just back from the frontlines were done out of their shares of land and in their class struggle sought help from Workers' Soviets in towns.

Proletarian power calculated that it could ensure the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 71.

supply of food to towns without resorting to force for a certain period. Under the Decree on Grain Monopoly, all surplus grain and fodder had to be handed over to the state. But the peasants refused to comply. The food situation in Moscow, Petrograd and other grain-consuming industrial regions grew from bad to worse: they were short of 180 million poods¹ of grain at a time when according to the People's Commissariat for Agriculture's estimates the grain-producing gubernias had a surplus of 655 million poods. In the spring of 1918 large industrial regions were on the verge of famine. Between November 1, 1917, and August 1, 1918, only ten per cent of the minimum amount of necessary grain and even a smaller proportion of other food products had been procured. This was due, among other things, to the destruction of large landed estates which had provided the bulk of marketable grain. On the other hand, there was a sharp increase in food consumption in the rural areas themselves; for the first time in the history of Russia the peasants had enough to eat.

After the liquidation of the landed estates, it was the kulaks who found themselves in possession of the bulk of the marketable grain. In this connection the Government intensified its measures of coercion. In May 1918 it passed a decree "On granting the People's Commissar for Food emergency powers in the struggle against the rural bourgeoisie hoarding grain reserves and speculating in them". Peasants who refused to deliver grain were proclaimed enemies of the people and could be sentenced to not less than a ten-year prison term and their property confiscated.

Food detachments consisting of urban workers were sent to villages. It was a great campaign for grain to save not only the proletariat but in fact the entire urban population from starvation. It was an extreme measure, for all ordinary steps to obtain grain proved futile. This

¹ 1 pood approximately equals 16 kilograms. — *Ed.*

drive called for no less heroism than the fighting at the fronts. There were cases when the peasants voluntarily handed over their grain to the food detachments, but more often it was necessary to conduct thorough searches and forcibly requisition the grain. Frequently these detachments encountered armed resistance on the part of some of the peasants.

The worsening food situation and the plans to speed up the socialist revolution in the countryside made it necessary to look for a reliable social base there. The food detachments were regarded as suitable vehicle of the revolution. But as distinct from the town Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies which automatically expelled the exploiting elements, the Soviets in the countryside were not fit for this task inasmuch as they represented all sections of the peasantry, including those who lived by exploiting the labour of others.¹ In some villages the old "commune" dominated by the moneyed peasants operated behind the signboard of rural Soviets (restriction of suffrage was legalised only with the adoption of the Soviet Constitution of July 10, 1918). The required organ was found in the person of the poor peasants' committees which were empowered to take over authority in the localities from the "cluttered" Soviets. The Decree on the Organisation of Poor Peasants' Committees was promulgated on June 11, 1918. As a rule they were formed of the poorest peasants with the help and often under the guidance of representatives of the urban proletariat, namely, members of the food detachments. Kulaks and other wealthy proprietors and also peasants employing hired labour in excess of their personal requirements were barred from elections to these committees.

¹ In May 1918, Y. M. Sverdlov noted with regret that "kulak-bourgeois elements were playing the leading role in the rural volost Soviets" (*Minutes of the Sitzings of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the 4th Convocation*, 1920, p. 294 (in Russian).)

Jointly with the food detachments the poor peasants' committees in the latter half of 1918 redistributed the land in favour of the middle, and particularly of the poor peasants, and reduced the kulak allotments by approximately 50 million hectares (out of the 80 million which were in their possession). Under the decree on their organisation the poor peasants' committees helped the Food Commissariat's agencies to expropriate surplus grain, agricultural implements and other property from the "kulaks and the rich" and to distribute them among the poor peasants. The Government confirmed the ban on leasing land and employing hired labour. All these measures resulted in the partial expropriation of the rural bourgeoisie, partial because the movement for setting up poor peasants' committees naturally did not extend to territories which were at that time still controlled by the counter-revolutionaries, including such key agricultural areas as the Ukraine, the Don area, part of the Kuban Territory and also Siberia. On the other hand, through the committees and food detachments the poor peasants received part of the grain and other property confiscated from the wealthy rural sections and as a result swelled the ranks of the middle farmers. Carried out by the poor peasants' committees, the second redistribution of the land levelled out the status of the peasants to a still greater degree.

At that time Lenin attached exceptional importance to the activity of the poor peasants' committees. There was a period when he regarded their establishment as "the key problem . . . in our whole revolution".¹ Explaining to the poor peasants that it was essential for them to unite without delay, he proclaimed war against the kulaks as "the last, decisive fight".² People's Commissar for Food A. D. Tsyurupa who advanced the idea of setting up poor

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 171.

² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

peasants' committees in all rural areas declared: "We propose a war against the rural bourgeoisie who have laid their hands on the grain. We propose the most ruthless war, a war to the end."¹

The establishment of these committees energised the poor peasants and awakened them to political activity. More than 100,000 village and volost poor peasants' committees were set up in 33 gubernias of the Russian Republic. The alliance of the urban and rural lower strata against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements was in line with the initial plan for further developing the socialist revolution and, in the final count, stimulated this development. If the hard peasant shell which concealed heterogeneous (as regards their class nature) elements had remained intact, the proletarian town would not have found fertile soil for the spread of socialist principles throughout the country.

Parallel with the policy of getting the poor peasants to unite in their committees, Lenin and the Party strove to invigorate socialist relations of production in the countryside. In accordance with the Party programme documents the decrees promulgated by the Soviet Government in that period pointed out the advantages of the collective cultivation of land on large farms, and were at first quite critical about the petty peasant economy. Thus, the Regulations on Socialist Organisation of Land Exploitation adopted by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on February 14, 1919 spoke of the need to move from individual to joint forms of land tenure; that large Soviet farms, communes, joint cultivation of land and other forms of collective land tenure were the best means of attaining this aim and that therefore all forms of individual land tenure should be regarded as transient and outdated. The Regulations also said that efforts would

¹ Quoted from V. P. Gerasimuk, *The Beginning of the Socialist Revolution in the Countryside*, Moscow, 1958, p. 58 (in Russian).

be made to "create a single production economy", to ensure the needs of socialised farms in the first place and only after that the needs of the individual farmers. The rural producers' co-operatives were granted the right to receive subsidies and loans. It was along these lines that the introduction of the new organisation of land exploitation was started, but only started because it involved only a small portion of cultivated land. In February 1919 the All-Russia Central Executive Committee passed a decision "On the Socialist Organisation of Land Exploitation and on Measures for Switching to Socialist Agriculture". It orientated the countryside towards socialist forms of land cultivation, while individual small peasant farming was pointedly relegated to last place and all its forms were qualified as "transient and outdated". This was a step forward both in comparison with the Decree on Land and also with the Decree on Socialisation. In complete conformity with the policy of War Communism and centralisation, the decision stated in part: "The organisation of land exploitation should be based on efforts to establish a single production economy which would provide a maximum of economic benefits for the Soviet Republic with the least expenditure of people's labour."¹ It also envisaged the requisition of agricultural implements from the wealthy sections of the peasantry.

At the same time, it was believed that the transition to collective forms of labour in the countryside would be accomplished only when the overwhelming majority of the rural population would become aware of its expediency. Lenin wrote that "it would be the greatest folly to try to introduce socialised farming by decree",² and that "the transition from small individual peasant farms to collective farming will take some time and can

¹ *Decisions of the Party and the Government on Economic Issues*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1967, p. 109 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 141.

certainly not be accomplished at one stroke".¹ He resolutely opposed any attempts forcibly to impose collective forms of farming on the peasants.

Communes, where everything was common property from land and cattle to household utensils, were set up in some places, usually on the basis of former landed estates and often by the revolutionary workers. State-run farms (forerunners of the present-day state farms) were set up on a slightly wider scale. More widespread were associations for the joint cultivation of land and artels which were the lowest form of producers' co-operatives and which socialised only a part, usually about a half, of the cultivated land. Evidently the cause lay in the fact that collective work in combination with the principle of private property better than anything else coincided with the peasantry's communal traditions intertwined with its small-proprietor mentality. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that many communes were such in name only and in fact, were nothing more than artels.

Growth in the Number of Socialised Farms
During War Communism

Years	Communes	Artels and associations for the joint cultivation of land	State farms
1918	975	604	3,101
1919	1,961	4,227	3,547
1920	1,892	8,608	4,384

In accordance with the principles of its social policy, the Soviet state, naturally, helped to develop the communes in the first place. But however attractive the idea of communes may have been, they were extremely weak economically. More or less well-off farmers did not join them; only the poor peasants did. And so it happened that

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 341.

the communes, and for that matter the majority of the artels, had land but no cattle, no implements and no money. Most of them were inefficient as a result, and Lenin called some of them "alms-houses".¹ The initial enthusiasm over the establishment of the first communes prevented a sober appraisal of the fact that they were very far removed from genuinely communist principles and were the embodiment of primitive, consumer-type "communism" based on natural farming.

As regards the state farms, many of them existed only on paper, or were extremely inefficient. On top of that the peasants in general were not disposed to preserve the large farms and preferred to divide them among themselves.

It would have seemed that in conditions of a direct shift to equalitarian production and distribution collective forms of farming would have blossomed forth. But the opposite was the case. And the main reasons were obviously that the method of reorientating socio-economic development by decree and administrative methods had not been prepared economically and thus proved to be inapplicable, and also that this reorientation could have been effected only on the basis of painstaking socio-psychological as well as technical and economic preparations. Of the utmost importance was the socio-psychological state of the peasants in that period. They had just taken over the land of the big landowners, something they had dreamed about for centuries, and were all set to try and use it on their customary, individual basis. There was little ground to expect that having set themselves this objective the peasants would readily give it up and turn *en masse* to collective farming.

Of the total confiscated land area 86 per cent passed into the hands of individual farmers, 11 per cent was taken over by the state and a mere 3 per cent was dis-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 527.

tributed among agricultural co-operatives. The decree of February 14, 1919, which made it incumbent on the communes and state farms to supply agricultural produce to towns simply could not be implemented. And yet the communes were the shoots of new relations in the countryside, in the most stagnant layer of Russia's society, and therein lay their main purpose. The results of their activity could not but be influenced by the fact that just as the individual farmers, they had to hand over all surplus food products to the Food Commissariat's agencies.

At the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 an intensive discussion over the ways agriculture should be organised was conducted in the Soviet press. Some Party members regarded the communes as a model of communist production. Nevertheless, the Eighth Party Congress qualified the organisation of the communes as one "of a series of measures towards the organisation of large-scale socialist production".¹ The speaker in the Congress's agrarian section V. V. Kurayev acknowledged that "there was a period when the policy of Soviet power was characterised by a particularly strong tendency in favour of the communes. . . . Support was given only to the communes; nothing but communes were organised and attention was focused only on communes or collectives closely resembling communes. Insufficient attention was paid to all other types of farming; practice has shown, however, that this policy was not fully correct, and this should be admitted".²

CIRCUMSPECTION IS NEEDED

Gradually the Party arrived at the conclusion that only those forms of socialised labour and production which would appeal to the middle peasants—the principal figure

¹ *The Eighth Congress of the RCP(B)* . . . , p. 405.

² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

in the countryside—should be introduced in agriculture. “We must accelerate the socialisation of agriculture, we must win over the middle peasants,” it was emphasised in the report of the agrarian section at the Eighth Congress. “Of course, the middle peasantry will not join the commune. They will find it unacceptable. The middle peasantry will accept more primitive forms of socialisation of agriculture. And it is our duty to advocate and develop these primitive forms and furnish them every assistance. . . . The main idea behind this slogan (socialised cultivation of land. — Y. A.) will provide the peasants with such a form of collective farming which they will accept with the least difficulty, and the transition to which would not abruptly violate the conditions and way of farming they were used to, so as to enable them to accomplish this transition imperceptibly.”¹

One of the delegates to the Congress made the point that, as he put it, “for us communists the creation of socialist agriculture is in the long run a rise in agricultural production as a whole. . . . We do not in the least, will not and should not give up our efforts to raise the productivity of agricultural industry whatever its form, even up to and including individual farming.”²

Premature socialisation would not have strengthened communist relations—on the contrary, it would have completely disorganised the country. So it was not surprising that when in 1919 the Soviet Government of the Ukraine proposed that state farms should become the basis of the countryside, Lenin made the following objection: “Under no circumstances can we organise our affairs in that way. We must accept the fact that we should convert only a very small part of the progressive farms into state farms, otherwise we shall not effect a bloc with the petty peasants—and we need that bloc.”³

¹ Ibid., pp. 236-37.

² Ibid., p. 267.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 193.

Life itself showed that it was necessary to approach the problem of socialist reorganisation of the countryside with circumspection and that it was most important to take the interests and habits of the rural population into account, and most expedient to orientate peasantry on the simplest forms of co-operation, even simpler than associations for joint cultivation of land, above all, on establishing supply and marketing co-operatives. It also showed that disregard for the actual state of affairs for the sake of general principles was fraught with danger.

The poor peasants' committees seriously undermined the kulaks, but they did not eliminate them as a class. Having adapted themselves to the new conditions the kulaks began to invest money in moveable property, including food products, cattle, farming implements and all sorts of utensils, all of which they often hid from the food detachments and poor peasants' committees. They also engaged intensively in speculation and virtually all of them loaned grain and other products to the needy peasants. The wealthy sections of the peasants not only introduced a corvée system¹ but also leased land, and employed hired labour. In order to circumvent the law they hired farmhands by the day under the pretext of friendly, neighbourly services.

The purpose of the poor peasants' committees was to intensify the class struggle in the countryside. But in the long run, however, the countryside became even more middle-peasant as a result of their policy. A survey in 22 gubernias disclosed that 79.5 per cent (as compared with 60.5 per cent in 1917) of the households owned up to four hectares of sown land, while the proportion of peasants who had no sown land dropped from 10.6 per

¹ The poor peasants who loaned grain, money, farming implements or cattle from the wealthy peasants paid off their debt by working a specified number of days for the latter.

cent in 1917 to 4.7 per cent, while the proportion of peasants with more than 10 hectares of sown land fell from 3.7 per cent in 1917 to 0.5 per cent.

The equalitarian redistributions of land which were conducted by the village communes and which the poor peasants' committees turned into a regular practice (often once a year) resulted in a still further social levelling of the countryside. Although these redistributions prevented the kulaks from amassing land, they also had their negative aspects inasmuch as they made the peasant lose interest in raising soil fertility. At the time, member of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee Petrushkin, himself a peasant, wrote that the peasant "thinks along the following lines: the land does not belong to me; today or tomorrow it will be taken away from me and turned over to somebody else. Why should I work for others? So he does not till the land (or, rather, does not put in the necessary amount of work and looks through his fingers at all this business), neglects it and it no longer yields the amount of products which, given good care, it would have been possible to obtain from it".¹ So the equalitarian principle, democratic as it was, could not be grafted to small-proprietor psychology and acted as a brake on economic development. It was with good reason that some Soviet writings published in 1920s characterised the period of the activity of the poor peasants' committees as a deviation from the proletarian revolution inasmuch as their policy "overstepped the limits of economic expediency and consequently was reactionary in the economic respect".² It should be mentioned, however, that the authors of such works overlooked the fact that the supreme meaning of revolution did not lie in narrowly understood economic

¹ See Y. Polyakov, *The Transition to NEP and the Soviet Peasantry*, Moscow, 1967, p. 92 (in Russian).

² L. Kritsman, *Heroic Period of the Great Russian Revolution*, Moscow, 1926, pp. 68-69 (in Russian).

expediency, that a revolution as a mass, and in this sense, a spontaneous movement could not precisely follow any rational plans and that the political efficacy of the policy of the poor peasants' committees had to be paid for in one way or another.

It often happened that revolutionary transformations in rural areas were accompanied by steps that undermined and disorganised the productive forces. "The expropriation of the kulaks," admitted delegate to the Eighth Congress of the RCP(B) A. K. Mitrofanov, "frequently degenerated into senseless confiscation of small enterprises, such as windmills and watermills at a time when nothing was done to organise this branch of production."¹

Yet the question of intensifying agricultural production was raised and steps were taken to solve it at least to a certain extent. In November 1918 a decree was passed on granting subsidies and loans to agricultural co-operatives to enable them to improve farming. But the decree produced no important changes inasmuch as the co-operatives were weak and the situation caused by the civil war was not conducive to its implementation.

Despite the fact that the decree on the establishment of the poor peasants' committees stipulated that middle peasants would take part in them—Lenin noted at that time: "...We are not even fighting the middle peasant, let alone the poor peasant"²—development often took a different course, particularly in fertile, more prosperous rural regions. Here the middle peasants were regarded as "middle kulaks" and were barred from taking part in elections to the poor peasants' committees. On the other hand, the corresponding articles of the Constitution, as we have mentioned earlier, were worded in such a way

¹ *The Eighth Congress of the RCP(B)*, . . . , p. 269.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 523.

that the poorest peasants and the agricultural proletariat were placed in opposition not to the kulaks alone. Incidentally, Lenin at that time also opposed "peasant Soviets", because the country needed "Soviets of farm labourers and of poor peasants".¹

The extreme measures carried out by the poor peasants' committees fanned the flames of the class struggle in the rural areas. But it did not develop along similar lines in all areas. Central Russia, where the rural capitalists had drawn a clear line between themselves and the working rural population even before the revolution, had its specific traditions of the peasant revolutionary movement and was predominantly subject to Bolshevik influence due to the proximity of industry and the presence of a developed working class. Therefore the village in that part of the country became an ally of the revolutionary town. But the fertile centre of commodity grain production—Don, Kuban, the Ukraine, Lower Volga Area and Southern Urals—became Russia's Vendée. There the rural population was wealthier, the kulaks more influential and the industrial proletariat considerably weaker. In July and August 1918 alone more than 200 armed actions against Soviet power took place in villages. But it should be noted that the rebels' slogan which was proclaimed on the advice of kulak ideologists was outwardly cautious: "For the Soviets, but without Communists". Although indirectly this slogan attested to the indestructible popularity of the Soviet system which gave the peasants land, the revolts assumed an anti-Soviet character. They opened the road to Whiteguards and foreign interventionists who, naturally, immediately abolished the Soviets, if they had not been smashed prior to their arrival. Yet, in spite of the fact that the revolts were advantageous to the bourgeoisie, it cannot be denied that they were of a specifically peasant nature. Lenin always spoke of the danger of Napoleons

¹ Ibid., Vol. 28, p. 473.

and Cavaignacs appearing on petty-proprietor soil, and as events showed a hard policy line provided an additional stimulus to their emergence.

Very soon the Soviet leadership encountered difficulties in carrying out its agrarian programme and realised the full extent of the danger arising from the resistance of the village. Characteristic in this respect was what Lenin said a month after the proclamation of the decree on the establishment of the poor peasants' committees. Noting that "the poor peasants have begun to rally together very quickly", he promptly mentioned that "a kulak spirit prevails among the peasants".¹ Later this observation developed into an admission that "owing to the inexperience of our Soviet officials and to the difficulties of the problem, the blows which were intended for the kulaks very frequently fell on the middle peasants".²

In these conditions Lenin searched for ways to solve the exceptionally acute food question and simultaneously pondered on the social policy in the country. In August 1918 he proposed that the Council of People's Commissars carry through a series of new measures which in other circumstances could have led to serious strategic changes in this policy. He proposed the establishment of large stocks of manufactured goods to be exchanged for grain, a prompt and sharp increase in the purchasing price of grain, introduction of a tax in kind (grain) instead of money tax to be levied on the wealthy peasants with their progressive taxation, and so forth. Corresponding decrees were issued, grain purchasing prices were raised 200 per cent; furthermore, the peasants could buy manufactured goods from the state only if they had delivered grain; the money tax which all peasants paid on an equal footing was replaced by tax in kind levied in the first place on the kulaks and to a lesser degree on the middle peasants,

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 32.

² Ibid., Vol. 29, p. 159.

while the poor peasants were wholly exempted from it. The payment of taxes did not release the peasants from the obligation of selling surplus foodstuffs to the state at fixed prices.

There was a good harvest in 1918 so that it was possible to increase state purchases somewhat; but not more than 40 per cent of the requirements of the urban population was satisfied. In view of the inflation the increase in purchasing prices proved to be of little benefit for the peasants. Moreover, because the industry, weak as it was, was geared to defence needs, it proved impossible to lay in large stocks of manufactured goods to be exchanged for grain. In 1920, for instance, 64 grams of nails were sold per household (one or two nails), eight ploughs and harrows per 1,000 households and only one scythe per household.

The very idea of tax in kind was constructive, provided it could stimulate agricultural production: it was not by accident that this tax subsequently paved the way for the New Economic Policy (NEP). But since, on the one hand, it was planned to requisition food surpluses so that the tax, too, consequently, turned into a kind of requisition, and since, on the other, this measure was dictated by the needs of the army in the field, the fiscal policy in the countryside in fact developed into partial expropriation which was not conducive to agricultural development.

It should be noted, however, that the idea of tax in kind was designed to improve the relations between Soviet power and the rural, predominantly middle-peasant population, inasmuch as their strained relations made themselves felt to a considerable extent.

A crucially important role in improving the situation was played by the more or less timely dissolution of the poor peasants' committees. Veteran Party member V. P. Antonov-Saratovsky, who headed the Soviet of the town of Saratov, centre of a large grain-producing gubernia, in his reminiscences wrote about a conversation

he had had with Lenin at the end of 1918. "The middle peasant was angry," he told Lenin, "because the poor peasants' committees confused him with the kulak, and because, having taken everything away from the kulaks, they gave nothing to the middle peasant." Lenin's reply was that "the poor peasants' committee have fulfilled their mission and have to be disbanded".¹ Shortly they were dissolved and the Soviets in the villages were re-established, but this time on the political and personnel basis of these committees.

A special resolution on the need to reappraise the Party's attitude to the middle peasantry was passed by the Eighth Party Congress. In this respect it marked a turning point, for it orientated the Party on upholding the interests of the middle peasants. Reporting on the agrarian question at the Congress, Lenin pointed out: "*Coercion applied to the middle peasants would cause untold harm.*"² The Congress adopted a policy of forming an alliance with the middle peasantry, although the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat, naturally, remained the Bolshevik Party's most reliable bulwark in the countryside. In wake of the Congress a decree was promulgated introducing a number of tax privileges for the middle peasantry. Moreover, in just a few months after his appeal for "the last, decisive fight" against the kulaks, Lenin suggested that they should not be fully expropriated but that "only pressure must be brought to bear on the kulaks and they must be kept under the control of the grain monopoly".³

Needless to say, the disbandment of the poor peasants' committees could not by itself solve the food question. In January 1919 the Council of People's Commissars decreed the introduction of a surplus food requisitioning system

¹ *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1969, p. 182 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 210.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, p. 199.

which determined the economic policy in the countryside right up to the spring of 1921. Accordingly each gubernia was obliged to turn over to the state a specified amount of grain and fodder at fixed prices, virtually free of charge, in view of the rapid inflation. This amount was broken up between uyezds, volosts and individual peasant households. Threatened with severe punishment, the peasants were compelled to hand over surplus food. The surplus requisitioning system operated on a class principle; first and foremost surplus food was requisitioned from the kulaks, then from the middle peasants and in extreme cases from the poor peasants.

As a result, grain stocks increased from 107.9 million poods in 1918/19 to 212.4 million in 1919/20 and 367 million (including the Ukraine which had been liberated by then) in 1920/21.

The most important task was that of immediately obtaining food at any price in the interests of the revolution. The rationing of the food laid in as a result of surplus requisitioning could not satisfy even a half of the vital requirements of the proletarian town. Yet in conditions of the civil war it proved to be the only way out of the situation and made it possible to keep the army fed. On the other hand, it was welcomed as a form of the ardently desired non-commodity communist relations between town and country. This economic policy, however, did not stimulate the development of the productive forces. It often happened that not only surplus food, but also seed stocks and even grain intended for personal consumption were confiscated. All this deprived the peasants of incentives to expand production, for, they reasoned, what was the use of enlarging the sown area if everything grown on it would be requisitioned. In spite of everything, the surplus requisitioning system proved to be historically justified, for in the final count it helped Soviet power to defeat the counter-revolutionary forces.

The well-known Party publicist and economist I. I. Skvortsov-Stepanov said in 1921: "As we went ahead with surplus food requisitioning and, in general, carried out food operations, we did not distinguish between the various village elements. In many places and on many occasions we took away almost the entire harvest instead of only a part of it."¹ In those years Lenin repeatedly spoke out against the extremes which requisitioning had attained in the countryside. For example, he emphatically demanded the abrogation of decrees authorising the confiscation from the peasants of property in excess of 10,000 rubles' worth, their second cow and their second horse.² Summing up the results of the surplus requisitioning policy the Tenth Party Congress noted that the Party had gone too far, overstepping all limits.³

On the other hand, the situation engendered by the civil war made it impossible to give up this policy in spite of individual appeals to abolish the extraordinary tax and switch to tax in kind and grain purchases. Characteristically, Lenin's summons, notwithstanding its restrained tone, not to apply coercion to the middle peasants and to form a stable alliance with them, encountered sharp objections from some Party functionaries, even though it did not amount to an appeal to reappraise the economic policy in the countryside. For instance, the opinion was expressed that as a result of unceasing "concessions" to the peasants (although facts spoke of the opposite) the Party was allegedly faced with the danger of "degenerating" into a predominantly peasant party. . . .

Although the bulk of the peasants accepted War Communism not without resistance, they nevertheless realised

¹ *Tenth RCP(B) Congress. Minutes*, Moscow, 1963, p. 69 (in Russian).

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 40, pp. 337-39.

See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 216-17.

that this was the policy of the revolution which gave the peasants land and turned them into equal citizens. It was a sort of compact with the revolutionary proletariat, under which the peasantry paid the latter in the form of surplus requisitions for saving it from the restoration of the pre-revolutionary order. That such a danger existed was clear from the temporary occupation by the Whiteguard forces of a number of regions in Russia where the old order was re-established, all the gains the revolution gave the peasants were liquidated, their elected organisations were dissolved, the land was returned to its former owners, and the police and bureaucratic machinery hostile to the peasants were restored. This "argument" was bound to have its effect. And in the course of the civil war the peasant masses unequivocally took the side of the proletarian power, against the rule of the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY CONSOLIDATES ITS GUIDING ROLE

Not only the bourgeois but also petty-bourgeois parties thoroughly discredited themselves in the course of the civil war. The Mensheviks and the SRs waxed indignant whenever they were put on the same level with the Cadets and the monarchists who gradually switched from legal opposition to the Bolshevik government in the Soviets to an open struggle against them and direct participation in the counter-revolution. The civil war indeed brought both the ones and the others into a single counter-revolutionary Whiteguard camp.

As any great revolution (the French revolution of 1789-1793, for example), the Russian revolution witnessed what one might describe as "Left polarisation", when the logic of historical development caused some parties and groups, formerly regarded as revolutionary, but which

displayed inconsistency and indecision, to slide into the camp of reaction and share its lot.

Taking into account that the Mensheviks and Right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries were participating in the struggle against Soviet power and in Whiteguard governments, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee in June 1918 decided to expel the representatives of these parties from the Committee and all local Soviets. Three weeks later it adopted a similar resolution with regard to the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in response to the armed mutinies they had organised.

In the preceding chapter we mentioned that the Left SR (or the peasant) wing of petty-bourgeois democracy up to a certain period co-operated with the Bolsheviks, including in the government. At the time Lenin noted that in principle the Bolsheviks and the Left SRs approached basic questions of revolutionary transformations from common positions. This co-operation was ruptured by differences over the crucial question of a separate peace with Germany. But that was not all. The exceptionally acute character of the Russian revolution, the situation which had developed as a result of the civil war and the attempt to effect a direct switch to communist production and distribution were bound to result in a split between the consistently proletarian (Bolshevik) and petty-bourgeois (Left SR) wing of the revolutionary camp.

Left Socialist-Revolutionaries at first withdrew from the Soviet Government and then, in July 1918, raised a military mutiny against it. Apart from the differences over the signing of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, this volte-face was due to the Government's rigid support for the poor peasants' committees. Since they opposed the differentiation of the peasantry, a stand which virtually turned them into the ideologists of the so-called industrious peasants, in the first place, the kulaks who had the say in the villages, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries were against this support. Prominent Left Socialist-Revolu-

tionary Maria Spiridonova openly challenged the Government's policy at the Fifth Congress of Soviets when she declared: "We shall fight in the localities and there will be no room for the poor peasants' committees."¹

The Soviet Government's decisions directed against the petty-bourgeois parties reflected the socio-political reality in the sense that by going over to the side of the counter-revolution, the petty-bourgeois parties slowly but surely forfeited the social basis which they formerly had among certain groups of working people.² The result was the extension of the social basis of the Bolshevik Party which now consolidated its role not only as the vanguard of the working class but also as a party which expressed the interests of all working people.

This fact, however, did not in the least mean that it was opposed in principle to a multi-party system. The expulsion of the Mensheviks and the SRs from the Soviets did not automatically outlaw their parties, and they retained their legal right to exist. Right up to their mutiny the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries were the second biggest group, after the Bolsheviks, in the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, and their leader Maria Spiridonova was chairman of the Committee's peasant section. Even at the height of their hostility with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks in effect did not preclude the possibility of co-operation with a non-Marxist and non-proletarian peasant party.³ On July 6, 1918, immediately after the mutiny of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Central Committee of the RCP(B) made it clear that it would continue to work with them if they

¹ *Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets*, Moscow, 1918, p. 59 (in Russian).

² For details see K. V. Gusev, *The Party of the SRs: From Petty-Bourgeois Revolutionism to Counter-Revolution*, Moscow, 1975 (in Russian).

³ On this question see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 50.

would break with the insurgent line of their Central Committee. Those Left Socialist-Revolutionaries who continued to support Soviet power retained their seats in the Soviets, including the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. Two new parties—"Narodnik-Communists" and "Revolutionary Communists", which arose on the remnants of the Party of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and subsequently either dissolved themselves or joined the Bolshevik Party—were represented in these organs of people's power.

It is interesting to note that after the establishment of Soviet power in Hungary, Lenin spoke with approval about the activity of the coalition socialist government which included both Right- and Left-wing Socialists who later became Communists. He wrote to Hungarian workers: "You have set the world an even better example than Soviet Russia by your ability to unite all Socialists at one stroke on the platform of genuine proletarian dictatorship."¹ In the same letter, however, Lenin spoke of the need consistently and firmly to implement the dictatorship of the proletariat, mercilessly suppress the exploiters' resistance and discard bourgeois ideology. It was in these fields that the leaders of Soviet power in Hungary acted with inadequate determination and thus paved the way for its defeat. Therefore, in analysing the causes of this defeat, Lenin considered that one of them lay in the conciliatory attitude to the reformists who, "as long as they remained what they were, they could not but sabotage the revolution."²

It is easy to see why the Bolshevik Party placed little trust in those Mensheviks and SRs who after lengthy vacillations finally sided with Soviet power in the civil war. Although they could not but recognise the positive results of the revolution, they did not give up attempts to counterpose their political line to that of the Bolsheviks.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 390-91.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 382.

This was regarded as an effort to undermine the unity of the revolutionary people forged in the civil war, and, objectively, as assistance to its enemies. Hence Lenin's biting rebuff to SR and Menshevik critics at the Eighth Congress of Soviets: "We ... now see in fact that the unity of the proletariat in the epoch of social revolution can be achieved only by the extreme revolutionary party of Marxism."¹

This, of course, did not mean that the proletariat would not form an alliance with other social classes and strata. On the contrary, Lenin consistently supported the class alliances of the proletariat as could be judged, for example, from his struggle against ultra-Left-wing sectarianism in the first years of the Communist International. But he did not identify the question of the Party composition of the Soviets with that of the composition of the Soviet Government. Similarly, while speaking up in favour of the proletariat's alliance with other social groups of working people, he became more and more disapproving, in the course of developments, of the idea of the Bolsheviks co-operating with parties that formerly relied on these groups, but which had now lost their support and also the trust of the revolutionary forces. "An agreement with the middle peasants," he wrote, "must not be construed as necessarily implying agreement with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries. Nothing of the kind."²

Still, while considering it impossible in view of the conditions in Soviet Russia at the time to allow other parties, to take part in political decision-making, Lenin insisted on using the members of these parties, people loyal to Soviet power, as specialists. Among people prominent in the Supreme Economic Council, the State Planning Committee and other state bodies of that period, there was a fairly large number of bourgeois professors

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 520.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, p. 50.

and specialists from among the Mensheviks and Left and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. This was an indication of the Soviet Government's willingness to co-operate with people, who were not communist-minded, but only if they did not act as a party aspiring to political power.

But Lenin did not regard this line as the only possible one and expedient under all conditions. Characteristically enough, the Central Committee of the Party at the end of the war approved the idea of establishing a "buffer" Far Eastern Republic to be governed by the Bolsheviks together with the Mensheviks and the SRs. The experiment was carried through.

The flirtation of petty-bourgeois democracy with the monarchists and foreign interventionists was short-lived. As early as November 1918, Admiral Kolchak engineered a military coup in Siberia, disbanded the Directory consisting of SRs and Cadets and set up his own dictatorship. In the north the British interventionists, acting along similar lines broke up the "democratic" government headed by Socialist-Revolutionary Chaikovsky and placed authority in the hands of Whiteguard General Miller. The situation was the same in almost all regions of Russia occupied by the Whiteguards.

For its part the peasantry, having discovered through bitter experience that its interests were incompatible with the policy of the Whiteguards, also began to break away from petty-bourgeois democratic parties which prevented its bond with Soviet power.

Under the impact of events, the Red Army's victories in the first place, a part of the membership of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties gradually began to search for ways to remain on the political scene. The Central Committee of the Menshevik Party, for instance, at the end of 1918 came out against the intervention and co-operation with the bourgeoisie and withdrew its slogan supporting the Constituent Assembly, thus

acknowledging that the Soviets were the only possible form of authority in the country. Naturally, this did not mean that the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries had accepted the dictatorship of the proletariat in practice, for whenever an opportunity presented itself they tried, as they had done in the past, to switch Russia's development to bourgeois rails. In view of its contradictory nature this policy was clearly doomed to failure.

At the same time, some functionaries of the Menshevik Party and both Socialist-Revolutionary parties joined the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, having become convinced that the latter's actions conformed to political expedience. These parties were in their death throes, and neither the annulment of the decision to expel the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries from the Soviets (end of 1918-beginning of 1919) nor the lifting of the ban on their activity, provided they would be loyal to Soviet power, were able to save them. In 1919 and 1920 these parties held their congresses and meetings in the Soviet Republic, but were unable to regain their positions in the Soviets. Even those Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who would not reconcile themselves with Soviet power and eventually emigrated were forced to admit, as Martov did, for example, that "history has made the Bolshevik Party the defender of the very foundations of the revolution" and that, therefore, it was the duty of all revolutionaries to "support the Bolsheviks".¹

In Soviet Russia the Bolshevik Party's monopoly over political activity was only natural because the civil war and the uncompromising policy of War Communism pushed petty-bourgeois democrats into the camp of counter-revolution. In order to co-operate unconditionally with the Bolshevik Party they would have had to depart from some of their fundamental principles. The logic of

¹ *Pravda*, October 10, 1922.

the class struggle in Russia in those concrete historical conditions prompted the Bolsheviks to break completely with the said parties. But they did not preclude the possibility that in other countries and other conditions, such co-operation between parties could become necessary, a fact which has been fully borne out in the contemporary period. It should be noted that Lenin time and again spoke about such a possibility in connection with his analysis of the tasks facing the Comintern.¹

It was the Bolshevik Party which raised the people for a relentless struggle against the Whiteguards and the interventionists and achieved victory in that struggle. The Party's numerical growth in those years attested in the first place to its increasing authority among the people. Shortly after the October Revolution its membership rose to 300,000 and then continued to increase so that by March 1921, i.e., by the end of the civil war and the foreign intervention, it numbered 730,000, and that in spite of the tremendous losses which it had sustained in that period. As always the working class was the Party's main reserve, but the inflow of people from other sections of the population, the peasantry above all, also substantially increased its membership. This was due to the fact that during the war a large number of Red Army men most of whom were yesterday's peasants joined the Party. The Party's policy of uniting the poor peasants likewise attracted a fairly large number of the latter to membership.

At first the Party leadership consciously allowed such "peasantising" of its ranks inasmuch as it enabled Soviet power to become rooted in the countryside. At the same time, it was necessary to take account of the danger emanating from the enduring nature of the peasant's small-proprietor psychology.

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 400-01; Vol. 42, p. 411.

As in the past, the Party was headed by a numerically insignificant stratum of professional revolutionaries: the Bolshevik "old guard", i.e., a close-knit group of Marxist intellectuals and advanced, politically educated workers, the so-called workers' intelligentsia. Noteworthy in this connection are Lenin's words, uttered at the height of the civil war: "If a future historian ever collects information on the groups which administered Russia during these seventeen months, on how many hundreds, or how many thousands of individuals were engaged in this work and bore the entire, incredible burden of administering the country—nobody will believe that it was done by so few people. The number was so small because there were so few intelligent, educated and capable political leaders in Russia."¹ But this stratum was steadfastly replenished by workers and peasants who had displayed their organisational abilities in the course of the civil war.

Inner Party life continued to rest on the principles of democratic centralism, but the element of centralism was more pronounced in connection with the extraordinary situation caused by the civil war and the intervention. The Eighth Party Congress proclaimed that "in the present epoch direct military discipline in the Party is essential".² The demand for iron discipline was included in the theses "The Role of Communist Party in a Proletarian Revolution" adopted at the Second Congress of the Comintern (July-August 1920) as one of the crucial organisational principles of the communist movement.³ Still later, a resolution adopted at the Tenth Party Congress (March 1921) stipulated that during the civil war and the struggle against the interventionists the "militarisation of Party organisations" had to be

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 153-59.

² CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 2, p. 74.

³ *Communist International in Documents*, Moscow, 1933, pp. 109-11 (in Russian).

the only possible organisational form of the Party.¹

But even during the civil war this was regarded as a derivative from the existing extraordinary circumstances and not as an immutable condition. On the other hand, the spirit of proletarian democracy was characteristic of inner Party life even in the most difficult years. This found expression in the elections to all Party organs from top to bottom at regular intervals. Party congresses were convened, as the Rules prescribed, once a year even in the grimmest period of the civil war. Lenin in his works never even hinted at discarding Party democracy in principle in connection with the war. Indicative in this respect was that the Eighth All-Russia Conference of the Party, which was held at the height of the civil war and emphasised the need to take swift decisions and carry them out accurately, pointed out: "At the same time, all controversial questions concerning Party life shall be freely discussed in the Party until a decision is passed."²

Another aspect of Party democracy was collective formulation of key decisions. During the civil war Lenin noted that "only corporate decisions of the Central Committee... only those decisions were carried out by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. The work of the Central Committee cannot otherwise proceed properly".³

As leader of the Party enjoying unquestioned authority, Lenin made it a rule to consult his associates and often modified his own views. V. V. Vorovsky wrote in this connection: "...He would never take a decision, never make a step until he would be convinced that it was not simply his personal opinion, but an expression of the views of many of his associates."⁴

¹ CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 2, p. 207.

² Ibid., p. 133.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 444.

⁴ *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Moscow, 1969, Vol. 3, p. 9 (in Russian).

WAR COMMUNISM IN THE LIGHT OF THE PRESENT TIME

Let us now recapitulate some of the results of the policy of War Communism. We know that it was dictated by the intention to concentrate all forces to smash internal and external counter-revolution and simultaneously to reduce to a minimum the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. Observers who approach that period from present-day positions very often focus their attention primarily on the seamy sides and the costs of War Communism, its maximalist objectives bordering on utopianism, the discrepancy between the intentions and the results achieved. The war not only inhibited the nascent growth of the productive forces but even disrupted the already strained economic links. In a multi-sectoral economy of a predominantly small-commodity nature, it was impossible immediately to introduce communist relations bypassing the essential stages of development. At certain periods, economic strain developed into political tension and threatened to obliterate the alliance of the working classes—the foundation on which the Soviet state rested.

“War Communism was not an inevitable stage in the development of the Socialist revolution. It was of a temporary character, necessitated by foreign military intervention and economic dislocation.”¹

Lenin pointed out that the policy of War Communism was a forced measure and that it had never been nor could have been a policy conforming to the economic interests of the proletariat. He repeatedly noted that some economic measures and orientations in those years were erroneous.² At the same time, in his speeches in which

¹ *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Moscow, 1960, p. 309.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 233, 234.

he acknowledged these errors he also declared that it would have been impossible to avoid the policy of War Communism as a whole. The situation itself compelled the revolutionary forces to take the shortest road to their goal, and experience alone could make them change their method of struggle. On the other hand, in order to win the civil war and increase the socialist gains it was essential for the Party to wage a relentless struggle against the enemies, prevail over the vacillating elements and pursue a determined and clearly defined policy. And yet it was with good reason that Lenin subsequently emphasised, that “we deserve credit for it”.¹ In a speech at the Seventh Moscow Gubernia Party Conference in October 1921, Lenin showed how erroneousness and expediency dialectically fused in the policy of War Communism.²

Finally, he did not preclude a return to this policy in extraordinary conditions, in the event of another war (subsequently this was also confirmed by the developments in some other socialist countries, particularly in Vietnam, whose policy during the armed struggle for independence contained certain features of War Communism).

At the same time, the errors committed were largely due to the fact that the country was advancing along an unexplored road, because at every step it was necessary to solve questions which had never faced a revolutionary movement in the past and the answer to which could not be found in any textbook. The period of War Communism enriched the Party and the country with vast experience of political guidance and practical administration; it taught them to overcome spontaneous, anarchistic trends and at the same time demonstrated the danger of extreme centralism and focused the attention of the builders of the new society on the threat of bureaucratic distortions.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 83-101.

In the course of the civil war the working class demonstrated in full measure its vanguard role, its unbending determination, revolutionary selflessness and enthusiasm, all those qualities which were adopted by the people and which proved to be no less important in the ensuing years.

Historically, the policy of direct assault on capitalism was fully justified. It signified, in effect, the creation and development of a new economic structure—the socialist mode of production. Having mobilised all the manpower and material resources of the country, this policy enabled it to hold out in the exceptionally bitter war against internal and external enemies. War Communism stirred the entire country; it roused millions of people to revolutionary struggle and laid the foundations for the moulding of the new, socialist man. Finally, it was the practical experience of the War Communism period which dictated the introduction of cardinal corrections into the policies pursued and disclosed the danger of fetishising any patterns, including revolutionary ones, that gradually made the country sense the need to revert to a new political course and work out an effective programme for building the new society.

What took place in Russia from 1918 to 1921 confirmed the truth that any great people's revolution immediately strives to attain maximum results within minimum time limits. The resoluteness of a corresponding policy as a rule depends on the acuteness of the class struggle and the extent of the country's economic backwardness. A new tactic is adopted only when it becomes clear that it is impossible to negotiate obstacles concerned. In this connection Lenin noted: "...There is apparently a law demanding that the revolution should advance beyond the point where it can cope, to consolidate the less important gains."¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 307.

The experience of War Communism is instructive for both the economically advanced and the developing countries. It demonstrates the inevitability of the bitterest resistance on the part of the exploiting classes in the various fields of life, economic, political and military, and consequently the need for determined revolutionary methods in emergency circumstances. It shows that a revolution does not end with the seizure of power but requires the setting up of a strong state capable of overcoming the resistance of the counter-revolution. War Communism confirms, even if indirectly, the possibility of shortening the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, given, of course, the existence of a large-scale industry, numerical superiority of the proletariat and rational organisation of economic activity. These conditions exist in the West today, but in Russia they were absent in those years, and that was why there were no socio-economic prerequisites for a direct and swift transition to socialism. On the other hand, the experience of War Communism cautions against any hasty radical transformations if there are no objective, above all, economic, prerequisites.

The civil war ended three years after the October uprising. The armed counter-revolutionary forces had been in the main wiped out. And now there was time to look around and concentrate on tasks which brooked no delay.

Naturally, defence of the revolutionary gains remained on the agenda. But although the danger of foreign intervention still existed, the main problem was the catastrophic economic dislocation. More than a quarter of the national wealth had been destroyed and the national income had dropped to nearly one-third of the prewar figure. The vast majority of the industrial enterprises were idle. The greatest damage was sustained by large-scale heavy industry, the backbone of the economy. Annual per capita production of pig iron and cotton fabrics dropped to less than one kilogram and less than a metre respectively. The almost complete paralysis of the transport system undermined the country's economic wholeness, intensified the fuel crisis, famine and ruin. Human losses beginning from 1914 surpassed 20 million. The country lost 29 per cent of its able-bodied male population. The number of hired

workers in industry dropped from 2,600,000 in 1913 to 1,480,000 in 1920/21 and 1,240,000 in 1921/22. Labour productivity declined catastrophically to equal 27 per cent of the prewar level.

The urban population was on starving ration and large numbers of people moved from towns to villages in view of increasing food supply difficulties. By 1920, slightly over a million inhabitants (as against 1.7 million in 1914) remained in Moscow, and just over 700,000 (compared with two million prior to the war) in Petrograd. At that time 116 million people, out of a total population of 136.8 million, lived in rural areas. A large number of experienced industrial workers had been killed in battle, and many had been promoted to administrative posts or had settled down in villages. A larger portion of the proletariat was becoming declassed.

Although the exhausted and depleted proletariat continued to remain the bulwark of Soviet power, there were occasional outbursts of discontent in its ranks. The workers were morally depressed not only by their half-starved existence but also by the rigid, military discipline at the factories. Lenin wrote that some sections of the workers were gripped by a sense of "instability, uncertainty ... and scepticism".¹

Discontent was the greatest in the countryside. It is true the food situation there was better than in towns; in spite of the requisitions many peasants managed to save a part of the harvest for personal use, and some had even enriched themselves by taking advantage of the disastrous economic conditions. Nevertheless, the system under which surplus food was requisitioned without compensation was bound to evoke the protest of the peasants. And it became particularly intolerable, from their point of view, after the end of the civil war when there was no longer any direct danger of the restoration of the rule of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 179-80.

the landlords. Accordingly, their response to the policy of War Communism was reduction of the sown area (compared with the prewar period, agricultural production dropped by 60 per cent) and organisation of revolts in which the leading role was played by the kulaks.

Having died down in 1919, revolts flared up again in the latter half of 1920 when it became clear that Soviet Russia's military victory was imminent. In some parts (Tambov region, for example), they acquired a mass character; some insurgent peasant-kulak armies numbered several thousand and even several tens of thousands of people. The movement culminated in the mutiny of Kronstadt sailors in March 1921. The fact of the matter was that after the war a large number of demobilised Red Army men joined the insurgents. It was a paradox only at first sight, for while at the front they had enjoyed the concern of Soviet power, they came under the onerous burden of the surplus requisitioning system upon returning to their villages. Characteristic in this respect is the lot of the protagonist in Mikbail Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*, a Cossack by the name of Grigori Melckhov, a squadron commander in the Red Army who became a bandit.¹ It was not by accident that in addition to the old slogan "Soviets without Communists" the mutineers demanded the abolition of the surplus requisitioning system and the introduction of free trade in food, grain in the first place. These slogans were heard in Kronstadt, too, where the overwhelming majority of the naval recruits who comprised the bulk of the mutineers were drawn from the prosperous southern regions of Russia and were even called "Ukrainians". Incited by letters from home they made the abolition of the surplus requisitioning system one of their main demands.

¹ In this connection it should be borne in mind that the Cossacks, who were organised into a military estate in tsarist Russia and enjoyed greater privileges than the peasantry, were more conservative than the latter.

THE REQUISITENESS OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Thus, the continuation of the policy of War Communism resulted in the narrowing of the Soviet state's social base. In 1921, Lenin wrote, "we felt impact of a grave—I think it was the gravest—internal political crisis in Soviet Russia. This internal crisis brought to light discontent not only among a considerable section of the peasantry but also among the workers."¹

It became clear that the working population's satisfaction with the radical social and political changes and the rout of the Whiteguards did not signify that all the various sections of the working people had fully and unconditionally accepted Soviet power's policy in its entirety. Dangerously illusory in this connection was the thesis put forward by the Party's prominent authority in agriculture I. Teodorovich to the effect that Soviet power in itself was an adequate stimulus for economic development. The need for a thorough reappraisal of values dictated by the change in the situation showed that revolutionary policy had to be extremely flexible, particularly in Russia, a country where modern and archaic forms of economy and everyday life existed side by side.

In the final analysis Soviet Russia managed to win the civil war thanks to the selflessness of the people, above all the working class the bulk of which, appreciating the danger of the restoration of the old system, consciously put aside its material, personal interests. But could this revolutionary enthusiasm be the sole motive force in the new conditions? Was it possible to employ the old "storm and onslaught" methods? And finally it was necessary to decide how to begin the restoration of the seriously damaged edifice of what now was Soviet Russia.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 421.

It cannot be said that the Bolshevik Party found an easy answer to all these questions. There were voices which demanded that all attention and resources should be concentrated on building up the industry. At first glance this seemed a natural demand, for being a party of the working class the Bolshevik Party strove to promote the former's interests to the full. But it was absolutely clear to the majority of the Party leaders that it was necessary to take into consideration the social make-up of the country with its predominantly petty-proprietor peasant population which on top of everything supplied it with food. It was all the more dangerous, therefore, to lose the confidence of this peasant majority. Consequently, it was essential to take steps to restore this confidence and thus prevent the dictatorship of the proletariat from deteriorating into a dictatorship which did not conform to the interests of the majority, and to avert the collapse of the revolution.

As an attempt immediately to "communist" the entire country, including the relations between town and country, War Communism proved to be of no avail. The stumbling block was the peasantry and its petty-proprietor psychology. Giving much thought to this side of the matter after the civil war Lenin arrived at the conclusion that it would "take generations to remould the small farmer, and recast his mentality and habits".¹

He also showed how this could be achieved: "The only way to solve this problem of the small farmer—to improve, so to speak, his mentality—is through the material basis, technical equipment, the extensive use of tractors and other farm machinery and electrification on a mass scale."² The transition of small farmers to socialised, collective labour, Lenin explained, "can be guaranteed when you have a very powerful, large-scale industry capable of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 217.

² Ibid.

providing the petty producer with such benefits that he will see its advantages in practice".¹

Thus, in Lenin's opinion, the urgent task was to organise normal, mutually acceptable relations, a bond between town and country, between the proletariat and the peasantry. Under War Communism small peasant production, far from joining in the "communisation" decreed from above, retreated into its own shell, whereas now the economic methods of this bond, being as they were in conformity with the interests of the small producers, could soften and even dissolve this shell and draw the peasants into the general process of economic development in the direction of socialism. In such a balanced situation it was possible to tackle another task, whose solution required a longer period of time, namely, the country's industrialisation. On the whole, this was a basis for a concrete, businesslike plan of socialist construction.

Taking part in formulating this plan and bringing its outlines to the knowledge of audiences consisting of Party members and workers, Lenin referred to works by theoreticians of scientific socialism. But not one of his predecessors had ever had to cope with the tasks that now faced Soviet Russia. And even if he did not immediately specify the most optimal forms of social and economic relations, in the remaining two-odd years of his creative activity he formulated the first comprehensive plan for socialist construction and which, as history subsequently proved, was the only correct one. Lenin's last works are known as his behests in which he charted the path to socialism.

The very essence of the plan indicated that the length and scale of the transitional period would be greater than anticipated. Previously it was believed that it would be passed quickly, but now it became clear that it would comprise an entire historical period, a relatively long one

¹ Ibid., p. 186.

in Russia where capitalist relations were less developed and the technical level of the economy was relatively lower than in the West.

The October Revolution fundamentally altered Russia's political make-up, destroyed the old and built a new superstructure. But for the time being it proved impossible to create an adequate socialist basis: in spite of the fact that the private-capitalist sector had been brought to naught or rather driven "underground" and its place had been taken by the socialist structure, although still very weak at that time, the basis in the countryside was represented by the patriarchal, especially small-commodity modes of production. It was, therefore, necessary "to bring the front of our economy in line with the achievements of our political structure".¹

Lenin concisely characterised this task as "a political revolution and its cultural (economic) digestion".² He understood cultural progress in the broadest sense—as the overcoming of archaic forms of culture, economic management and way of life, as an all-round modernisation of the country.

He attached particularly great importance to methods of organisation and administration both in economics and politics. In his speeches of that period he more and more often called for circumspection and gradualness in all matters concerning the peasantry, and the economic policy in general. Time and again he made this point clear by saying that it was necessary to replace methods of attack with methods of siege, inasmuch as attempts to solve economic problems in the style of War Communism at best yielded only partial successes and intensified general difficulties.

¹ *Plan for the Electrification of the RSFSR. Report of the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia to the Eighth Congress of Soviets*, Moscow, 1955, p. 36 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 44, p. 476 (in Russian).

As early as November 1920, in a speech to Communists of Moscow Gubernia, Lenin strove to attract the attention of the audience which was intoxicated with the victory in the civil war to another, qualitatively new creative task, that of "building new economic relations". This shows how deep-rooted were both the essence of NEP and the term itself.¹ Further Lenin pointed out that the solution

¹ The term "New Economic Policy" was first used in the resolution of the conference of the RCP(B) in May 1921 and in an article by Lenin published in *Pravda* on October 14, 1921. The abbreviation NEP, which subsequently became the common name for the socio-economic policy and the corresponding stage of development in Soviet Russia, was used in early 1922 in Lenin's notes of a report which he delivered at the Eleventh RCP(B) Congress. But it should be borne in mind that frequently, especially in common usage, the word NEP and its derivatives carried a negative implication and stood for money-grubbing and speculation, the travelling companions of the New Economic Policy, particularly in its early stages.

We should like to make another observation concerning the word NEP. Beginning with the 1930s Soviet historical literature, on the basis of Stalin's report on the draft Constitution of the USSR (*Problems of Leninism*, Eleventh Russian Edition, pp. 508-09), began to adhere to the opinion that NEP ended only in 1936, with the adoption of the new Constitution.

The crux of the matter is not only in the significance of Stalin's thesis, but also in that NEP is identified, and with good reason, with the transitional period preceding the completion of socialist construction which was proclaimed in the Soviet Union in 1936. In practice, however, a break in the gradual process of development set in at the end of the 1920s with the shift to large-scale industrialisation, the beginning of mass collectivisation of agriculture, the forcible liquidation of the private-capitalist sector and the kulaks as a class. Therefore, neither in their historical objectives and prevailing methods nor in their social content and consequences can the 1930s in Soviet history be regarded as a continuation of the 1920s. They constituted a new period in the history of the USSR.

In this connection it would be expedient to recall an opinion on this question voiced at a large scientific conference in recent years and which encountered no objections from those present. "...At the turn of the 1930s," historian Y. A. Moshkov noted, "the former economic policy underwent such major changes which deprived it of its important distinctive features. Thereupon our country embarked

of this problem calls "for new methods, a different deployment and use of forces, a different emphasis, a new psychological approach, and so on. On the place of methods of the revolutionary overthrow of the exploiters and of repelling the tyrants, we must apply the methods of constructive organisation; we must prove to the whole world that we are a force capable not only of resisting any attempt to crush us by force of arms but of setting an example to others".¹

His thought follows the direction in which the country would continue to advance. And this is a rejection of a premature, objectively unprepared transition to communist principles of production and distribution, an orientation of the producer on the economic stimuli, on making him materially interested in the results of his work. Shortly afterwards Lenin acknowledged that "the surplus-food appropriation system in the rural districts—this direct approach to the problem of urban development—hindered the growth of the productive forces and proved to be the main cause of the profound economic and political crisis that we experienced in the spring of 1921".² Under surplus-food appropriation system, he will go on to say, "the petty farmer loses interest in consolidation

upon a special economic policy which did not coincide with NEP and which still has to be given a name. Its main distinctive feature was the strictest centralisation of management in all spheres of the economy, rigid government control of economic relations, including those with the peasantry, forced winding up of trade between town and country, concentration in the hands of the state of the functions of distribution and supply, mainly along non-market lines, in the interests of industrialisation." (*Agrarian Problems in the History of Soviet Society*. Scientific Conference, June 9-12, 1969, Moscow, 1971, pp. 153-54, in Russian.)

It should be noted, however, that some authoritative historians adhere to the former, broader approach to the chronological framework of NEP.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 47.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 64.

and developing his activity and in increasing his output, all of which leaves us without an economic basis".¹ Thus it becomes obvious that economic development needs economic levers: this is a simple thought, but one obscured by the practice of War Communism and in conflict with its principles which, as it has now transpired, cannot ensure the fulfilment of the tasks of the transitional period.

Lenin pondered not only the situation in the countryside but also how to stimulate the peasant's labour and not to hasten to introduce changes which had not matured in the mind of the peasant himself. After all, this was what the Party strived to do in the past, too, and retreated from its initial plans only under the force of circumstances. *strove* But now the question concerned the entire economy, the whole population, including industrial workers. Looking through a letter from an engineer by the name of Moiseyev, who proposed changing over from equalitarian remuneration of labour to piece wages in order to differentiate between conscientious workers and shirkers, Lenin wrote in the margins: "Correct", and underlined the following words: "People cannot remain in a state of exaltation for years and only economic necessity can force them to work".²

A frank and objective assessment of the weaknesses of the economic policy in the period of War Communism was also given at a later date, in the Instructions of the Council of People's Commissars of August 9, 1921, authorising the enforcement of NEP, which was drawn up with Lenin's direct participation. Noting that since the supply of enterprises "had not been organised in conformity with their productivity", the Instructions stated that "under such methods of supply and the existing system of payment for work the producers were not and could not

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 411.

² *Lenin Miscellany XXIII*, Moscow, 1933, p. 255 (in Russian).

be interested in the results of their labour and improving production methods...".¹

Lenin's conclusion that it was impossible to rely wholly on enthusiasm and that economic incentives were of primary importance for socialist construction was clearly a reappraisal of the old principled approach. He said as much in October 1921 when he characterised the experience of War Communism as follows: "Borne along the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people, we expected to accomplish economic tasks as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected—or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration—to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small-peasant country as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong."²

It is true that these observations were made at a later period. But even prior to NEP, at the end of 1920, Lenin in his speeches placed increasing emphasis on the idea of moving to a new stage, a qualitatively new level of economic development. While during War Communism economic expediency was superseded by political and military tasks, now, he said, "we shall turn to economic policy".³ What is more, "this second half of our task" is "the major and more difficult part".⁴

Thus, Lenin was beginning to think not only about changing methods, but also about effecting a radically different approach to the problems of social and economic

¹ *Decisions of the Party and the Government on Economic Issues*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1967, p. 245 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 58.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 372.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

development, about the need for a new economic policy as the path to socialism.

This policy was basically different not only from War Communism. It also contained important innovations as compared with the policy of the first months following the October Socialist Revolution, whose programme provisions were set forth in *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* and which in some of its aspects anticipated NEP. The most important innovations were special emphasis on economic incentives stimulating the growth of production and heightening labour productivity and changing the nature of economic relations between town and country and between the producers and consumers in general, and finally, the utilisation of the market, the commodity-money relations and even the private sector in strengthening the socialist sector and ensuring progress towards socialism.

We should hasten to make the point, however, that the original idea of NEP, its further elaboration and, finally, its introduction into practice did not preclude but, on the contrary, envisaged its inalienable historical, ideological and political continuity of the policy of the first months of Soviet power and War Communism. This continuity manifested itself in the strengthening of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the political leadership by the Bolshevik Party, in the reaffirmation of the aims of communist construction and the preservation of the revolutionary spirit. Incidentally, it is possible to gather as much from Lenin's opinion about the engineer Moiseyev's letter referred to above. As though elaborating on Moiseyev's comment: "It is necessary once and for all time to stop building anything on enthusiasm and heroism,"¹ Lenin wrote that further development should be promoted "not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution

¹ *Lenin Miscellany XXIII*, p. 255.

(emphasis added.—Y. A.) and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and economic accounting".¹

Lenin's thoughts about a new economic policy were connected with the slogan of "civil peace" which replaces civil war. This shift was not capitulation, but an audacious, though soberly calculated political step. Indeed, the exploiters had been defeated as a military and political force. Why then should it be wrong to use their experience as organisers and specialists, as well as the energy of the petty-bourgeois sections, if the working class which had been organised into a state retained its political domination plus ownership of the land, its mineral wealth and key means of production? It was an unusual and bold step, which was risky only insofar as the Party had never acted in such circumstances before. And in order to remove the risk the Party's policy had to be skilful, flexible and circumspect and embody the latest forms of class struggle.

On the eve of NEP Lenin declared: "We must base ourselves on the individual peasant; we must take him as he is, and he will remain what he is for some time to come, and so it is no use dreaming about going over to socialism and collectivisation at present."² And if the slogan of forming an alliance with the middle peasant was primarily of a political nature, the formula of "relying on him" developed and filled it with an economic content. Later Lenin would be more specific: "We must adapt our state economy to the economy of the middle peasant,"³ and to promote the Soviet economy by using not only the "local" capitalist operating under the supervision of the proletarian state but also the foreign capitalist, possibly the one against whom it had been necessary to wage a war just a few months ago. In November

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 58.

² Ibid., Vol. 31, p. 528.

³ Ibid., Vol., 32, p. 226.

1920 Lenin proposed that foreign firms should be given concession rights to develop part of the country's natural resources.

The elaboration of the new plan for socialist construction was connected with the changed international situation: not only with the termination of the war—at first it was not clear how long the respite would last and whether it would not end abruptly in the near future—but also with the fact that the prospects for a world revolution which seemed so promising in 1918, were now put aside indefinitely. The prediction that a proletarian revolution would triumph in the West did not come true in the sense that no rapid and simple solution of the question was found. The revolutionary movement abroad began to slow down and this gave rise to the prospect of a more or less long period of peaceful coexistence between Soviet Russia and capitalist countries. It was in this and the ensuing period that Lenin's strategy of peaceful coexistence came into being. On the other hand, Lenin said, although only in the initial period, that it would be possible to modify NEP and even reject it altogether "if there is a revolution in Europe".⁴ NEP in the country and peaceful coexistence in its foreign policy were the two sides of a single plan for building socialism in Soviet Russia.

THE INERTIA OF OLD VIEWS

Although at first Lenin's thoughts about the need to elaborate a new economic policy were of a general nature, and he had not yet publicly formulated the expediency of abandoning the surplus appropriation system, this "Procrustean bed" of economic relations between town and country, they far from immediately won the approval of the majority of Party activists. It was not easy to relin-

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 309.

quish the hope for a swift consolidation of socialist relations, to stop believing in the all-conquering power of the "storm and onslaught".

The Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets which took place in December 1920 was characteristic in this respect. The draft law "On Measures to Strengthen and Develop Peasant Farming" submitted to the Congress by the Government envisaged material incentives (bonuses) to "industrious" peasants effectively managing their farms. Saying that this draft encouraged the kulaks, the Communist delegates at a meeting of their group amended the draft in the sense that bonuses would be awarded to village communes as a whole and not to individual farmers. Learning about this, Lenin subjected the amendment to cautious criticism in the group. He agreed that the kulaks should not be encouraged, but at the same time he managed to convince the group that the possibility of giving bonuses to individual peasants should be retained, although the main emphasis was laid on awarding bonuses to communes and collectives. Replying to one of the delegates who asked whether bonuses should be awarded "to the wealthier peasants, that is, those who owned larger tracts of land which they themselves tilled", Lenin said that if such a peasant received a bigger plot of land because others were unable to cultivate it he was fully entitled to a bonus for his high labour productivity. "So why punish him, if he works hard on it?"¹ he exclaimed. But even this qualified stand met with opposition from some delegates who sought to bring strong pressure to bear on the kulaks.

Upholding the anti-kulak orientation of the Soviet policy in the rural areas, Lenin nevertheless already at this congress warned about the danger of wholesale enforcement of the 1918 decree on the socialisation of kulak lands, farm implements and livestock. But at the time there

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 265.

were still strong feelings in the Party in favour of continuing the War Communism policy in the countryside. Former "Left" Communist Osinsky, then Deputy People's Commissar for Agriculture, considered it necessary to increase state interference not only by effecting the distribution of agricultural products but also by directly regulating agricultural production. His supporter B. Filipov went even further and demanded the organisation of the "pauperised peasantry into a state agricultural army".¹ The proponents of this stand, for instance, Teodorovich whose name we have already mentioned, entertained the erroneous opinion that the peasants had discarded their small-proprietor psychology and had come to consider themselves state workers employed on state-owned land. These people failed to realise that such a socio-psychological change required a long period of time and positive experience of collective farming.

Here is what two prominent authors of the period had to say about the political and psychological inertia of War Communism widespread among the Communists: "...We got used to it, and almost came to love it. And when it became necessary to realise that it had to be discarded and a new course adopted, we thought and thought and could not budge."²

The Eighth Congress of Soviets proclaimed the sowing of cultivated plots "a state duty" and the reserves of seeds in the possession of individual peasants "the state seed fund" which the peasants could use only with the permission of the authorities. Sowing committees set up for the express purpose of supervising agricultural production on the spot went to such extremes in interpreting state instructions that in some gubernias they even told the peasants not only how, when and what to sow, but also how to bring

¹ *Ekonomicheskaya zhizn*, October 1, 1920.

² A. V. Lunacharsky and M. N. Pokrovsky, *Five Years of Proletarian Dictatorship*, p. 22 (in Russian).

manure to the fields and so forth. And although Lenin at the same Eighth Congress said about the peasants: "We shall achieve nothing by the old methods..."¹ and suggested that the rights of the sowing committees be curtailed by deleting the provisions on penalties for the peasants, the congress, in effect, orientated the countryside on the old path of development. It is true that Lenin supported Osinsky, but only because the latter came under an attack by even more "Leftist" delegates who insisted on the speediest collectivisation of the countryside.

It would, of course, be an oversimplification to consider that the decisions of the Eighth Congress of Soviets did not correspond to Lenin's intentions, but, as it seems today, they did not reflect the entire dialectics of his line of thinking, orientation on new methods, and the emphasis on economic incentives which appeared in his speeches of that period. It is not surprising, therefore, that the state regulation of agriculture proclaimed by the congress proved ineffective. Food procurement declined and many local Party organisations asked the centre not to allow the seed fund to become the property of the state. Discontent continued to mount in the country, and in this situation the Kronstadt mutiny of 1921 proved to be a most forceful warning.

THE TAX IN KIND—THE BEGINNING OF NEP

But Lenin had long ago arrived at the conclusion that the surplus appropriation system had to give way to a tax in kind. As far back as November 30, 1920, he drew up a draft government resolution on replacing the surplus appropriation system by a tax in kind. Taking this into account there is every reason to believe that Lenin had conceived the idea of switching to NEP in the autumn of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 328.

1920. On February 8, 1921, he wrote and immediately submitted to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee his thesis envisaging: a) replacement of the surplus appropriation system by a tax in kind; b) lowering the size of the tax as compared with the surplus appropriation system; c) reduction of the rate of the tax in proportion to the growth of the ploughman's "industriousness"; d) that the peasant will be able to employ whatever surplus may remain in his possession in the local economic turnover.¹ This short document, not more than half a page in length, became the basis for the crucial turning-point in the Soviet path to socialism.

It would be wrong to think that the plan for the New Economic Policy came as a flash of inspiration to Lenin, as a sudden "change of scenery". Let us begin with the fact that its appearance was preceded by a lengthy search, that it did not emerge all of a sudden in its final form but only gradually acquired all the necessary details and crystallised over a certain period of time. Furthermore, although the plan clashed with the principles of War Communism, there was an important link connecting it with the preceding stage—the decree on the tax in kind of October 30, 1918 (which, as it happened, was not implemented due to specific circumstances). As far back as the Eighth Party Congress which met in 1919 some delegates proposed laying in grain stocks through purchases and barter trade. But it was only natural that at that time the majority was strongly opposed to these suggestions.

With the civil war over, more and more Party members began to speak up in favour of introducing a regular tax and abolishing the surplus appropriation system. P. Bogdanov, who was shortly appointed Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, opened a bitter polemic in the press with Osinsky, in the autumn of 1920, over the question of relations with the countryside. He proposed that

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 133.

a fixed tax should be levied on the peasants and noted in passing: "Don't tell the peasant what to sow and how to sow; tell him what you want to take from him. . . ."¹ The prominent economist, member of the State Planning Committee S. Strumilin (subsequently academician) also spoke out against the surplus appropriation system and proposed that non-economic influence on the peasants should be limited.

Increasing demands for the replacement of the surplus appropriation system with a tax in kind and for a general regulation of relations with the peasantry came from economists, Party activists in the localities, officials holding responsible posts in government agencies, particularly in the Commissariat for Agriculture, who knew the position of the peasantry, and the Commissariat for Food (the latter was experiencing ever greater difficulties in collecting the surplus food). Support for the tax in kind and economic stimuli was expressed at the Eighth Congress of Soviets by some local government and land department officials, chiefly from the grain producing areas.

Lenin could not remain indifferent to the change of mood inside the Party. But it was his direct contacts with representatives of wide sections of the peasantry that influenced him to reappraise the economic policy. His attention was drawn to the extreme discontent and impatience of the peasants manifested at a meeting of peasant delegates at the end of October 1920 at which he was present. In December that year he spoke with non-Party peasants who had attended the Eighth Congress of Soviets, and mentioned that he had "learned a great deal from their discussion".² He was so impressed by the peasants' views that he sent a summary of their statements to all members of the Central Committee and People's Commissars. In it there are phrases such as "You have to make

¹ *Ekonomicheskaya zhizn*, November 16, 1920.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 520.

the peasant interested. Otherwise it won't work. I saw firewood because there is a stick over my head. But you can't carry on agriculture that way." This opinion was expressed by a delegate from Kostroma Gubernia, while a peasant from Perm Gubernia declared that the "stick" was the "food requisitioning". Lenin became convinced that in general non-Party peasants wanted the immediate termination of the surplus appropriation system and the introduction of a tax in kind.

Shortly before the Eighth Congress of Soviets, Lenin characterised the government proposals to the congress as the required "system of carefully thought-out measures"¹ intended to promote agricultural production. But the non-Party peasants made it clear that this system was incomplete and unsatisfactory. Their stand arrested Lenin's thoughts to such an extent that very shortly he undertook a practical reappraisal of the decisions of the congress of Soviets which were clearly behind the times.

After the congress, in January and the beginning of February 1921, Lenin carefully studied letters received by the editorial board of the peasant newspaper *Bednota*, and in that period (beginning of February) he met and conversed with a number of non-Party peasants. At the same time he gathered and generalised all information supporting the idea of the need to replace the surplus appropriation system with a tax in kind. A preliminary decision to abolish the surplus appropriation was probably taken on February 4. On that day Lenin publicly announced suspension of the surplus appropriation system in 13 central industrial gubernias and added, as though replying to those who advocated the replacement of this system with a tax in kind: "Let us review the relations between the workers and the peasants. . . . We are not opposed to reviewing these relations."²

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 419.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 110.

Evidently it was Lenin's conversation with a Siberian peasant Osip Chernov that finally tipped the scales in favour of the tax in kind. This colourful old man, who had served his time at hard labour in tsarist Russia for being a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, read his own report based on the views of many other Siberian peasants, proposing the replacement of the surplus appropriation system with a tax in kind. Although many people did not believe in the success of Chernov's mission, Lenin proposed to publish his report in the form of a letter to *Pravda*, and even edited it himself. Lenin's draft of February 8 written immediately after his conversation with Chernov began as follows: "Satisfy the wish of the non-Party peasants for the substitution of a tax ... for the surplus appropriation system."¹

➤ Lenin's draft became the basis for the activity of a special commission which at the end of February submitted a draft resolution on the termination of the surplus appropriation system to the Central Committee. In the beginning of March the CC approved it with certain amendments and then it was endorsed by the Tenth Party Congress and the latter's decision was made law by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on March 21, 1921. Under the decree the grain tax levied on the peasantry was lowered as compared with surplus appropriation from 423 to 240 million poods. This figure was calculated to cover the minimum requirements of the towns, and also the army (whose numerical strength in peacetime was, naturally, reduced) and was at the same time the lowest that the peasants could be expected to fulfil; according to S. Strumilin's estimates, the volume of the tax amounted to not more than 20 per cent of the peasants' labour. On top of that the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Government promised gradually to

¹ Ibid., Vol. 32, p. 133.

lower the tax in kind as the economy developed. In March 1923 a single agricultural tax was introduced which, on the whole, was cut down to 10 per cent of the harvest. (Later it was lowered still further.)

Henceforth, the peasant knew that the tax collector would come only once a year. And since he knew the size of the tax he also knew what reserves he had to run his farm. The tax in kind was progressive and its size depended on the sown area: the poorest farms (with a sown area up to one hectare) were tax-exempt. This was a rejection of the old equalitarian approach, the elimination of War Communism principle of mutual guarantee in keeping with which the village commune was collectively responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the surplus appropriation system. This was done, as the All-Union Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars explained in an appeal which accompanied the March 21 decree, so that "the hard-working, industrious farmer would not be held responsible for the slackness of his fellow-villager". At the same time everything was done to curb the unqualified interference of the local authorities in the peasants' economic affairs. The sowing committees were disbanded in the beginning of 1922, and when the Eleventh Party Congress was in session (March-April 1922), Lenin, pondering the speeches of delegates on the agrarian policy (some of which were "dirigist" but not as extreme as previously), arrived at the conclusion: "The most urgent thing at the present time is:

"not to tie our (neither the Party's nor the Soviet Government's) hands by any orders, directives or rules until we have collected sufficient facts about economic life in the localities and until we have sufficiently studied the actual conditions and requirements of present-day peasant farming;

"under no circumstances to permit what would be most dangerous and harmful at the present time, and what the local authorities may easily slip into—superfluous, clumsy

and hasty regulation that has not been tested by experience."¹

Therefore, the main principle to be observed on economic management was "not to do evil in the name of doing good".²

Generally speaking, Lenin's style of state administration—thoughtfulness, desire to study life and take it into account, mistrust of hasty decisions—manifested itself with particular force in the matter of defining the correct approach to the peasantry during the NEP period.

The decree of March 21, 1921, and other corresponding instructions were enforced not without difficulty. On the one hand, support for War Communism was still strong: some leaders believed that "liberalism" towards the petty proprietor would undermine the socialist state. Among those who still favoured the surplus appropriation system was People's Commissar for Food A. D. Tsyurupa. Resistance to NEP was registered in some localities. On the other hand, the peasants themselves did not immediately grasp the seriousness of the new measures. But the Leninist leadership resolutely went ahead with the planned switch, and even in spite of the terrible drought and famine of 1921 Soviet power did not re-introduce the War Communism methods. In areas unaffected by the drought the first tax was collected almost completely—96 per cent.

The imposition of the tax in kind, as the basic measure of the New Economic Policy, proved to be a great relief for the peasantry. And Lenin, who in the beginning of 1921 noted that "discontent undoubtedly prevailed among a vast section of the peasantry", later said: "The peasants are satisfied with their present position. We can confident-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 327.

² Ibid., p. 328.

ly assert that."¹ Beginning with 1923, after the country had removed the dire effects of the famine, the peasants began to enlarge the cultivated area, the supply of food to towns improved and Russian grain for the first time after the revolution once again appeared on foreign markets.

Thus, it turned out that economically stimulated small peasant farming was quite capable of contributing to the overall economic development of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Peasant revolts had practically ended. In Tambov Gubernia alone about 13,000 deserters and 5,585 participants in the revolts voluntarily surrendered to the authorities in two summer months of 1921. In its report for 1921, the Central Committee of the RCP(B) pointed out that the abolition of the surplus appropriation system and the enforcement of the New Economic Policy played a "decisive role in putting an end to the disturbances".² The change in the mood of the peasantry signified that the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry—the foundation of the revolution—had been re-established with the help of economic methods.

The replacement of the surplus appropriation system by a tax in kind raised the problem of how the peasant was to realise the surplus food products that now remained in his possession. At first it was planned that as during the period of War Communism he would be able to do so through direct commodity exchange (i.e., without the use of money) with industrial enterprises and also with private owners, handicraftsmen, for example, whose activity had been legalised and encouraged, and in general with people living in towns and urban-type settlements, within local limits, that is, on the market-place. In the resolutions adopted by the Tenth Party Congress

¹ Ibid., Vol. 33, p. 424.

² See *Eleventh Congress of the RCP(B). Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1961, p. 641 (in Russian).

and the Tenth Party Conference (May 1921) on Lenin's reports, commodity exchange was regarded as the "main lever of the New Economic Policy",¹ although the purchase and sale of commodities on a local scale was allowed and Lenin, as can be gathered from his notes, did not preclude the restoration of trade.² A special fund to keep the peasants supplied with consumer goods and agricultural equipment in exchange for their products was set up, and state commodity exchange offices were opened in the localities. It was also hoped that commodity exchange would restrict the activity of the private sector, hold back speculation and prevent a return to trade.

But the opposite happened. The state supply system which was badly organised and inadequate at first could satisfy neither the peasants, nor the townsfolk, nor even the state enterprises. And in order to ensure their own supply and to realise their commodities all of them often turned to the legalised private market. The latter attracted the peasants also because they could sell their products there at prices several times higher than they were paid at the state commodity exchange offices. Inasmuch as the consumer was not always able to obtain the needed commodities in state-run commodity exchange offices and even in the local market, the need for money as the universal equivalent and a reliable means of exchange continued to grow. Through the commodity exchange system the government in 1921 managed to lay in only 8.6 million poods of grain instead of the planned 150 million. Quick to grasp the situation, Lenin said in October 1921: "... This system of commodity exchange has broken down; it has broken down in the sense that it has assumed the form of buying and selling. ... The private market proved too strong for us; and instead of the change of commodities

¹ See *CPSU in Resolutions...*, Vol. 2, pp. 257, 268.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 326.

we got ordinary buying and selling trade."¹ And although the development of trade was a very unpleasant discovery for the Communists, Lenin emphasised that they had to adapt themselves to it, for otherwise the country would be overwhelmed by a wave of spontaneous buying and selling, by the money circulation.²

The negative consequences of the development of trade were felt immediately. Yet trade, the market and commodity-money relations became the "transformer" which radically improved the economic situation and helped to remove political tension. By adapting itself to the market the socialist state made it serve its interests; it became a lever for indirectly regulating the economy. The concept of the economic content of the transition period changed accordingly: commodity-money relations, which were once regarded as alien to it, gradually became the natural framework of the Soviet economy.

The New Economic Policy brought about a rapid recovery in the countryside and agricultural production. In the period between 1922 and 1925 the production of grain rose from 56.3 to 74.7 million tons, sugar-beet from 1.9 to 9.1 million tons, and the livestock population increased from 45.8 to 62.1 million head.

CHANGES IN THE RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The development of commodity-money relations tended to undermine the existing social structure in the countryside. It consolidated, especially at the very outset, the position of the kulaks. Their strength at the beginning of NEP was not based on land tenure because the equalitarian principle was still predominant in it, but on pos-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 96.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

session of draught animals, farm implements, money and also experience and enterprise. Many kulaks purchased the standing crops from the needy peasants, and then, having gathered it in, resold it, sometimes at an exorbitant price. Their economic strength increased to a still greater extent when the equalitarian approach was replaced by a strictly differentiated, individual one, and when beginning with 1922 the peasants were granted the right to choose any form of land tenure, including the right to withdraw from the commune, when the annual redistributions of land were stopped and the peasants were allowed, although within certain limits, to lease land and hire labour power.

On the other hand, the switch to NEP in one way or another worsened the position of some sections of the poorest peasants. They were no longer entitled to the free use of the farm implements and draught animals belonging to the wealthier peasants as had been the case in some parts of the country following the establishment of the poor peasants' committees. The state which gave land to the peasants lacked the means to provide each poor peasant with the necessary implements and draught animals. Consequently, the kulak who had preserved his farm implements, cattle and grain stocks was in a much better position. The urban industry was not yet sufficiently developed to employ the surplus labour power from the countryside, that was why latent agrarian overpopulation still existed and could find an outlet predominantly in working for wealthier peasants. In 1925 there were more than two million farm labourers in the country. They made up the most destitute section of the rural population. Although labour legislation was on the side of the farm labourers, the kulaks often circumvented it. They robbed the farm labourers by offering them work in return for nothing more than meals and pretended that they were doing them a favour because they could discharge them at any moment.

Nevertheless, the new course which Lenin and the Party carried out in the countryside was the only correct one and in the final analysis dovetailed with the economic and social interests of the socialist state. In spite of the fact that the poor peasants continued to be the main political bulwark of revolutionary authority in the rural areas and the state strove to improve their position, they were incapable of producing the necessary amount of products and keep the market supplied. In these conditions the country's main task was to boost production and unfetter the countryside's economic potential all of which could be achieved on the basis of a more or less productive agriculture. Such was Lenin's train of thought. In a rough draft of the brochure *The Tax in Kind* he posed the following questions: "'Stake' on the middle peasant? On the kulak? Restoration of bourgeois relations?" and then answered them: "The pivot and touchstone will now be (is) an increase in products. Inde: the 'stake' on the middle peasant in agriculture.

"The industrious peasant as the 'central figure' of our economic revival."¹

Nevertheless, the Bolshevik policy in the countryside lost none of its class character. Lenin consistently mentioned that it was necessary to combine the "battle for production" with support for the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat. The poor peasants were still accorded tax privileges in 1925 and 1926, paying the state just over one per cent of their earnings, compared to more than 10 per cent paid by the kulaks. The state granted low-interest credits to the poor peasants, tried to the best of its ability to supply them with implements and seeds and continued to patronise the communes the majority of which consisted of the neediest sections of the rural population. Thanks to state assistance the number of poor peasant households gradually diminished both in absolute

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 323.

and relative figures. Contrary to the hopes and demands of the kulaks and their spokesmen—bourgeois agrarian economists—the state ownership of the land, which was the legal and political barrier to the development of capitalist relations in the countryside, remained intact. There were some “Leftist” publicists who accused the Party of ignoring the danger of the kulaks strengthening their positions. But their stand was groundless. On the contrary, the Party, in an effort to sustain the vigilance of the Communists and the proletariat towards the class enemy, drew their attention to that danger at its Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth congresses (which took place in 1923, 1924 and 1925 respectively). It was also just as important not to exaggerate this danger as some people were prone to do, being misled by the high figures showing the area of the leased land and the employment of hired labour in the rural areas. But the specific feature of the development of capitalism in Soviet Russia in the period of the New Economic Policy was that these bourgeois forms of relations were used not only and not so much by the kulaks as by the middle and even poor peasants. According to official figures for 1926, 79.1 per cent of the households which leased land did so to use *their own* labour power and *their own* means of production. In those years it was mainly the poor peasants who widely resorted to the practice of renting draught animals and farm implements. As regards the hire of labour power, the poor and weak middle peasant households accounted for 17.6 per cent of the total number of days during which hired labourers performed their work, other middle peasant households accounted for 61.5 per cent and the kulak farms—for only 20.9 per cent.

It was also important not to hasten the events. And yet the “Leftists”, interpreting the social changes in the countryside as evidence of the growth of the kulak’s role, proposed, as did Y. Preobrazhensky, for example, in 1921 and 1922, to declare a “class war” on the kulak. In

1923 the well-known publicist Y. Larin suggested a sharp increase in the taxation of the peasantry. It is not difficult to imagine what would have happened if these ideas had been translated into reality. The adoption of Preobrazhensky’s plan, as an economist put it, would have been tantamount to “killing a chicken laying gold eggs”. Having barely risen to its feet, agriculture, whose ability to produce for sale was ensured by the middle peasants and the kulaks, would have been nipped in the bud. The imposition of onerous taxes on the peasantry would have promptly affected both the supply of the cities and the general economic situation in the country, while the artificial sharpening of the class struggle would have “overheated” the political situation to the advantage of the country’s external enemies.

The Party rejected these “Leftist” extremes. Its Eleventh Congress (March–April 1922) turned down the “Leftist” draft resolution on the agrarian question which openly threatened not only the kulak but also the middle peasant households. Later, in 1924, *Pravda* sharply criticised Preobrazhensky’s ideas in an article printed under the ironical title “How to Wreck the Worker-Peasant Bloc”. In April 1925 the Fourteenth Party Conference rejected the proposal to consider as kulak all successfully developing farms without exception. Finally, the same conference and the Fourteenth Party Congress condemned Y. Larin’s appeal for a “second revolution”—the expropriation of the kulaks.

The effectuation of NEP in the rural areas was not without certain miscalculations. Possibly the tax rates levied on the kulaks were too low even though they were revised from time to time, legislation was not ideal and Party and government organisations in the countryside were not influential enough to prevent the kulaks from circumventing the law. At the same time the course which, on the one hand, was designed to assist the poor peasants, and, on the other, brought about an economic upsurge in

the countryside, was not devoid of an internal contradiction. Yet it was resolved inasmuch as the resources accruing to the proletarian state thanks to the recovery of commodity production in the countryside, were in the final count used to cultivate the shoots of socialism and bring about a complete victory over capitalism.

CO-OPERATION: FROM STATE CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM

The development of co-operation became a much more important element of the Party's socio-economic policy in the rural areas than it had been in the past. The number of co-operative societies rose from 24,000 in 1921 to nearly 55,000 in 1925. And when the Fifteenth Party Congress met in 1927, various forms of co-operation embraced almost a third of the total number of peasant households.

As distinct from the period of War Communism, when the establishment of co-operative societies, at least of the consumer type, was considered obligatory, peasants now joined a co-operative only if they wished to do so. This provision stimulated the co-operative movement in the countryside.

Though guided by the Party, the development of the co-operative movement was a natural process. The Party based its policy on the firm belief that "the peasantry would accept the socialist methods of agriculture only if it is proved to them in practice over a number of years that collective farming is more profitable, rational and so forth".¹

Agricultural co-operation mainly involved the spheres of supply and sales. As of June 1, 1928, a mere 1.7 per cent of the peasant households participated in various forms of collective land tilling. This was due, in particular, to the disintegration in the first years of NEP

of some of the economically inefficient collective farms, the withdrawal from them of a part of the collective farmers. But beginning with 1926 the development of the collective farm movement naturally resumed, thanks to the economic consolidation of the collective farms and the country as a whole. But the relatively small number of collective farms did not in the least mean that the level of co-operation in the countryside was also low.

Supply and marketing co-operative societies gradually penetrated all aspects of the peasants' economic activity. The establishment of traditional co-operatives which ensured the peasants' market requirements and in some cases provided agronomical and technical services and took part in the primary processing of agricultural raw materials, was followed by the rise of credit and savings societies through which poor and middle peasants obtained financial assistance from the state. As the Party saw it, state-co-operative credit was to drive a wedge between the bulk of the peasantry and the kulaks who still controlled the economic levers in the countryside, and help achieve the desired bond between the urban and the rural proletariat.

The main channel of direct, two-way economic ties between the small peasant farms and the socialist state was the contractual system—the conclusion of preliminary contracts under which the state purchased crucial agricultural products from peasant co-operatives and supplied the countryside with instruments, chemicals, machinery and other commodities. As a result, this form of co-operation, formally regarded as supply and marketing, embraced production, too.

As a form of socialist economic management, co-operation widely embraced the rural economy beginning with distribution, and not production. "By providing all-round support to all forms of co-operation..." it was written down in a corresponding resolution adopted by the Tenth Congress of Soviets, "Soviet power enables the

¹ See *GPSU in Resolutions...*, Vol. 2, p. 411.

peasants to retain their earnings so that they should not find their way into the pockets of the buyer-up and the trader, but be spent on rehabilitating their households."¹

In line with Lenin's instructions, preference was shown to the simplest forms of co-operation towards which the peasant masses displayed the greatest trust, while the collective farms, which subsequently became the basic form of co-operation, were regarded for the time being as an element of a more extensive process. At the time this trend in the development of co-operation in the countryside was regarded as optimal. In a special letter to all Party organisations, the Central Committee of the RCP(B) stated that agricultural co-operation would embrace broad sections of the peasantry and produce important economic results only when "alongside the solution of purely production tasks, it will begin to cater to all the requirements of agricultural production, including credit, the supply of agriculture with the means of production, organisation of farm produce sales and so forth".²

Envisaging the future collectivisation of agriculture, Lenin, nevertheless, considered that it should be carried out gradually and cautiously. "Only as the proletarian movement succeeds in the countryside," he wrote in 1918, "shall we systematically pass to collective common ownership of land and to socialised farming."³ Lenin was no longer alive when the country's industrialisation created the technical prerequisites for effecting this switch.

Lenin shrewdly defined the potentialities of co-operation and accurately envisaged the main direction of its future development. "Now we are entitled to say that for us the mere growth of co-operation . . . is identical with the growth of socialism. . . ." he wrote in his article entitled

¹ *Decisions of the Party and the Government in Economic Problems*, Vol. 1, p. 330 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 295.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 213.

"On Co-operation".¹ It turned out that NEP, in spite of the fact that it slightly opened the door to the establishment of capitalist relations, at the same time created optimal conditions for the socialist development of co-operation, whereas War Communism, which politically seemed to be more conducive to such development, failed to ensure it. It is a fact, for example, that the development of the state-co-operative contractual system signified the establishment of the required bond between socialist town and the countryside, the ousting of the private capitalist middleman, the speculator, and the "collectivisation" of the interests of individual peasants, and, consequently, the overcoming of their small-proprietor mentality as a result of its gradual remoulding and not by means of coercion.

Characteristically enough, Lenin spoke about the socialist orientation of co-operation in spite of the fact that the proportion of kulak and other wealthy households in it was considerably bigger than their proportion in the total number of peasant households. The reason was that the toiling peasants made up the overwhelming majority of the membership of the co-operative societies, and their chairmen were Communists.

In co-operation, Lenin wrote in one of his last articles, "we have found that degree of combination of private interest, of private commercial interest, with state supervision and control of this interest, that degree of its subordination to the common interests which was formerly the stumbling-block for very many socialists".² And indeed, formerly the socialist movement more often than not adhered to the view that private and social interests were incompatible, whereas War Communism and NEP showed (each in its own way, the former negatively, the latter positively) that private interests could be utilised in the interests of society and transformed at the same time, and

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 474.

² *Ibid.*, p. 463.

that economically unjustified violence over the former harms the latter.

Such utilisation depended on the preservation and strengthening of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the working class playing the leading role in respect to the peasantry. "Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society?" Lenin continued. "It is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it."¹

It was clear from Lenin's words that in the given conditions there was no need, for instance, to place small peasant farms under state control since they were united in co-operatives.

Having begun with the replacement of the surplus appropriation system by a tax in kind, NEP could not be confined to this measure alone and gradually came to embrace other aspects of economic activity, bringing material incentives into play.

The legalisation of private trade very quickly led to the appearance of tens of thousands of privately owned trading establishments—shops, stalls, booths, cafes, restaurants, beerhouses, etc. In the beginning of 1923 the private sector accounted for as much as 83.3 per cent of the retail trade turnover. The private businessman flourished thanks to his experience, enterprise and, last but not least, his ability to circumvent the law.

Under NEP, trade proved to be the most preferable field for private capital investment, since it required minimum preliminary spending and yielded high profits because of the rapid turnover of capital (from 7 to 13 times annually). Free from the burden of immovable property, the private owner could evade high taxes or prosecution by quickly winding up his business so as to re-open it somewhere else.

All this, however, also testified to the non-productive,

¹ Ibid.

parasitical orientation of Russia's private capital which under the prevailing conditions restricted the chances of the socialist state taking advantage of its development. The avarice of the private owner in Russia was tantamount to suicidal political shortsightedness.

At the same time co-operative and particularly state trade at first proved to be less enterprising, less flexible and less manoeuvrable than private trade. That is why the Party advanced the slogan "Learn to trade". And already in the mid-1920s the socialist state and the co-operative sector started vigorously to push the private owner out of the commercial field.

The development of trade nullified the plan for the abolition of money. And if in the beginning of NEP Lenin spoke with some degree of irony about paper money, regarding it as "hbourgeois", it turned out that as NEP continued, the depreciation of the ruble tended to undermine the Soviet economy. The introduction of a stable monetary unit put an end to inflation and injected new life into the financial system and the economy as a whole. Gradually all settlements were switched to a monetary basis, and that also meant that the single agricultural tax also acquired a monetary form. Payment for commodities and services by the population was reintroduced as early as 1921.

It should be pointed out that for the peoples of the backward Asian border regions of the USSR, where the local nobility and the rich subjected the toiling peasants, who practised natural and semi-natural farming, to semi-feudal exploitation, the commodity-money relations (the form in which the socialist state provided industrial and financial assistance to the peasants and the economic links which the latter established with this state) effectively undermined the rule of the semi-feudal elite, facilitated the co-operation of the local working people and helped pave the way for a direct transition of these peoples to socialism, bypassing the capitalist stage of development.

THE PRIVATE OWNER IN INDUSTRY

With the development of NEP private capital was admitted not only into the sphere of trade but also into industry, although to a limited degree. So long as agricultural production remained at a low level there was practically no source of accumulations for the rehabilitation of socialist industry. Therefore in the early period of NEP it proved possible mainly to promote the light industry which did not require large investments; in order to survive the operating heavy industry enterprises were forced to manufacture small consumer goods, including nails, or even eat into their fixed assets. Many non-paying, less important state enterprises had to be temporarily closed in view of the shortage of raw and other materials and also the necessary funds. The Soviet Government even issued a decree on the denationalisation of the smallest enterprises (with up to five workers and a mechanical engine, and up to 10 without one). The Supreme Economic Council was given the right to denationalise larger enterprises, too (up to 20 workers), not used by the state. This was done because thousands of small enterprises taken over by the state during the years of War Communism were standing idle. All this confirmed the correctness of Lenin's observation made in the period of the "Red Guard attack on capital", that "we have nationalised, confiscated, beaten down and put down more than we have had time to count".¹

Nevertheless, the Supreme Economic Council resorted to denationalisation only in separate cases, for the political harm it caused was evidently much greater than the economic gains it yielded.

To re-start the small and some medium-size enterprises which were standing idle, without violating the fixed principles, the Government decided to lease them,

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 334.

primarily to their former owners. As a result the state remained in possession of one or another enterprise and at the same time got it to resume production without hurdening the state budget. In order to prevent unreasonable exploitation of the enterprises they were leased for not less than a year but not more than six years. In actual fact, however, the term of lease lasted not longer than two or three years on average. Under the lease agreement the leaseholder paid a fairly high rent to the state and was committed to turn out a fixed amount of production, take care of routine repairs and return the enterprises to the state in good working order.

But the number of enterprises that were leased proved to be much smaller than expected, and most of them belonged to the food industry, chiefly flour mills and confectionery factories, and the leather and fur-dressing industry. By June 1, 1922, a total of 10,070 state-owned enterprises had been leased. Most of them were small, employing from 10 to 20 workers, but there were some which had from 200 to 300 workers each.

Nevertheless, the state derived certain positive results from this measure. Addressing a conference of Moscow Communists in the autumn of 1921, Lenin noted that the small coal pits in the Donets Basin which had been leased to individual peasants yielded the country up to 30 per cent of the mined coal in the form of rent.

But as time passed and the leaseholders came to realise that their hopes of regaining their property would never materialise and that business prospects were bleak, they cancelled their leases. In general it should be said that the lease campaign did not live up to expectations. The vast majority of the nationalised small and medium-size enterprises remained in the hands of the state encumbering it with expenses on their protection.

Apart from leasing, private persons were allowed to open their own industrial enterprises employing not more than 20 workers (later this "ceiling" was raised) with the

right to sell their output and purchase raw and other materials on the free market. But under the rigid dictatorship of the proletariat they did not venture to become too involved in private enterprise: only 25 per cent of the enterprises of the private capitalist sector were in private hands, the remainder were leased from the state, and they accounted for the same proportion of the total output of the private capitalist sector. Employing only from five to six per cent of the total number of workers in the country, their output was equal to a mere 8 per cent of that of the state sector. The important thing, however, was that private industry did not require state assistance (or if it did, only to a limited extent), it gave employment to a certain portion of the working class and, what perhaps was even more significant, helped to alleviate, even if to a very small extent, the shortage of commodities.

True, there were some members of the Party who thought that the development of small-scale private capitalist industry constituted a grave economic danger. Trotsky said as much at the Twelfth Party Congress (1923). But the dictatorship of the proletariat removed this danger; it was the influence of the private sector on the general socio-psychological climate in the country which merited greater attention. Its development, however, was slowing down as the state imposed increasingly stringent measures to restrict it.

CONCESSIONS: UNUSED FORM OF STATE CAPITALISM

State property was leased to foreign capitalists in the form of concessions to which Lenin attached great importance. Among other things he thought of granting concessions to develop forest stands in the Far North, virgin lands in the basin of the Ural River, in the Northern Kazakhstan and Western Siberia (the same virgin

lands which were developed in the 1950s) and the mineral resources of Siberia. This form of economic activity had its positive aspects: it would consolidate peace for the Soviet state inasmuch as foreign capital would be hamstrung by concessions; it would provide a fairly decent standard of life for a portion, even if a very small one, of the working class employed at concessionary enterprises, make it possible to study rational methods of economic management and speed up economic rehabilitation. In this connection Lenin observed: "The payment made to the concessionaires in the form of a share of the highly valuable products obtained (the concessionaires were accorded the right to export a part of their output. — *Y. A.*) is undoubtedly tribute which the workers' state pays to the world bourgeoisie; without in any way glossing this over, we must clearly realise that we stand to gain by paying this tribute, so long as it accelerates the restoration of our large-scale industry and substantially improves the condition of the workers and peasants."¹

Lenin extensively used these arguments in debates with those Communists—and there were many of them—who looked askance at the concessions, fearing both plots by foreign intelligence agencies, and the upsurge of speculation, and the return of the former owners of the nationalised enterprises who would be the first to apply for concessionary rights. "If we cannot catch spies after three years of war," he would say, "then all that can be said is that such people should not undertake to run the state."²

Contracts on concessions were patterned along the lines of a lease. It was written down in the model contract that upon the expiry of concessionary rights an enterprise would be returned "in such a state and condition that it would be able to continue manufacturing at least the same

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 458.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 455.

volume of output as it averaged in the preceding five years".¹ The contracts stipulated an obligatory minimum production programme—volume, assortment and quality of the output; the concessionaire was obliged to purchase in the USSR raw and other materials, provided they were available and their price did not exceed the price on the world market; the state had priority to purchase the output of the concessionary enterprise at fixed prices. For its part, the state undertook not to confiscate or requisition the concessionary enterprise and guaranteed the concessionaires reimbursement of the investments and the right to derive and export a certain amount of profit.

As of January 1, 1926, there were 117 operating concessions employing nearly 18,000 workers in the Soviet Union. Among them were fairly large ones and some had more than 1,000 people. Gold-mining provinces on the Lena in Eastern Siberia were leased to the British company Lena Goldfields. The American Averell Harriman (US Ambassador to the USSR during the Second World War) acquired concessionary rights over the manganese mines in Chiatura in Georgia. The manganese ore concessions yielded 85 per cent of the output of this mineral in Soviet Russia in 1925/26. For a long period the Swedish firm SKF operated the ball-bearing plant in Moscow, which employed 700 workers (now the First State Bearing Factory); at that time it was the sole producer of ball bearings in the country. The American Armand Hammer (now head of Occidental Petroleum), who in 1923 concluded a deal with the USSR Foreign Trade Ministry, the biggest in the history of Soviet-American relations, organised the production of pencils, pens and other stationery at the Moscow enterprises he leased. Tracts of land, forest stands and the less important oilfields were also leased as concessions. Several dozen concessionary

¹ See A. Y. Levin, *Socio-economic Sectors in the USSR in the Period of Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*, Moscow, 1967, p. 17 (in Russian).

agreements were signed in the sphere of trade, although the enterprises involved were much smaller.

The leading Western monopolies, however, were not inclined to take part in concessions or finance them. They still hoped that Soviet power would not last long. Even at the height of the activity of the concessions, i.e., in 1926 and 1927, they accounted for a mere 1.2 per cent of the country's industrial output. On the other hand, the concessionaires themselves at times advanced unacceptable demands, hoping, among other things, to be re-established in their prewar rights, or laying claim to key enterprises which, if leased, would have made the Soviet economy dependent on foreign capital.

Striving to make inroads into industries with a rapid turnover of capital, foreign capitalists were at the same time loth to make large investments. On the other hand, Party membership regarded concessions as the most unpopular form of state capitalism. Much too vivid was the memory of the recent semi-colonial dependence of pre-revolutionary Russia on the capitalist West, of the damage caused to the country by the foreign interventionists. In 1927, the state initiated measures to put an end to concessions, and in the 1930s all of them were annulled by agreement with the concessionaires.

Owing to the force of circumstances Lenin's ideas about using foreign capital to promote the socialist economy were not adequately translated into reality, but their significance, particularly for the socialist-orientated developing countries, remains to this day. In his works Lenin indicated the conditions under which concessions could be used in the interests of socialist construction: retention of state power in the hands of the working class; state ownership of large enterprises and mineral resources; selection of projects to be leased by the state, keeping most enterprises under its own control.¹

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 298.

Today it would be interesting to take a look at some of the more specific conditions for granting concessions as laid down in the decision of the Supreme Economic Council on July 29, 1918, which, owing to circumstances, were not implemented at the time. The following were the most important: 1) the territorial location of the concessions must be such as not to enable foreign states to create spheres of influence; 2) foreign capital in Soviet Russia is subject to Soviet laws; 3) the Soviet Government retains the right to buy out concessions prior to the expiry of their lease; 4) the transfer of concessions to another party without the consent of the Soviet Government is prohibited; 5) the profits of the concessionaires shall be kept within certain limits; 6) the payment of interest on invested capital shall be guaranteed to the concessionaires in monetary or commodity form; 7) efforts must be made to process export raw materials in the country; 8) time-limits for building and commissioning enterprises by concessionaires are fixed precisely; 9) the Soviet Government has the right to control all the economic affairs of the concessions.¹

The practice of purchasing technical assistance from foreign firms and specialists, i.e., what is now called know-how (elaboration of technical projects, consultations, adjustment of equipment, etc.), became widespread in the 1920s and especially in 1930s, in connection with industrialisation. In those years, the Ford Company of America rendered such assistance in building and commissioning the Gorky Automobile Factory, the US Stuart, and James and Cook firms, the German Thyssen in the development of the coal-mining industry, and so forth. The American engineer L. Cooper who consulted the designing and construction of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Power Station (the author of the project was the well-known Soviet

¹ See M. N. Iaptin and Y. I. Ponomarev, *Lenin and Socialist Economic Management*, Moscow, 1968, pp. 35-36 (in Russian).

hydraulic engineer Academician I. G. Alexandrov) was decorated with a Soviet order and his name became widely known in the country. Dozens of Soviet experts raised their practical experience in the West, chiefly at US and German industrial enterprises.

In some branches of the Soviet economy in the 1920s and 1930s (timber felling, coal mining, sea and air transport, etc.) there were also mixed joint-stock companies in which the Soviet state co-operated with one or another foreign firm. As a rule, the Soviet side provided mineral deposits, factory premises and labour power, while the foreign firms supplied the equipment and technical guidance. The shares and profits were, as a rule, divided equally between the two sides.

Leases and private trade, the recovery of the kulaks and the revival of private capitalist enterprises—all these elements of NEP, and also the forms and methods of state regulation of private economic activity constituted, according to Lenin, state capitalism subordinated to the socialist state and serving its interests.¹ He interpreted state capitalism not only as one of the modes of production existing in the country—its embodiment in the “purest” form were concessions—but also in a broader sense, as co-operation of the proletarian state with the private sector on the basis of state property in the means of production, as definite forms of this state’s economic policy employing capitalist principles of economic management, and finally, as a purposeful system of utilising private capital with a view to regulating it, subordinating it, and, in the long run, absorbing it. This latter trend, however, manifested itself very gradually.

Although the activity of private capital was strictly regulated by proletarian legislation, and foreign capital, while unwillingly helping to invigorate the economy of the socialist state, managed or was compelled to pay fairly

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 65-66.

high wages to the people it employed, the very fact of retreating from the former positions of "communist production and distribution" became more and more pronounced and assumed much greater proportions than had been envisaged.

DISAPPOINTMENTS AND PROSPECTS

This was felt above all in the changed outward way of life which in many respects was in sharp contrast with the high revolutionary enthusiasm and equalitarian austerity of the War Communism period. There emerged a stratum of NEPmen—*nouveaux riches* among whom were the owners of industrial, handicraft and particularly trading establishments, lessees of state factories, bosses of all sorts of pseudo-artels and pseudo-co-operatives, and numerous middlemen serving state-owned as well as private enterprises. These people made up a new bourgeoisie in which the former capitalists, both local and foreign, and landowners were in the minority, while the majority consisted of former Soviet employees, small traders and kulaks, in short, of dodgers who took advantage of the economic recovery and the growing pains to line their pockets. The NEPmen's stratum was relatively small, but since it was mainly connected with the distribution sphere it made "sound effects" out of all proportion to its economic importance. Against the background of the generally low living standard the gleaming show-windows of private restaurants and shops, and the semi-legal black market created a depressing impression on people who had given all their strength for the victory of the revolution and shocked them much more than equality at the lowest level characteristic of the War Communism period.

As a result, there were frequent manifestations of disenchantment and protest fanned by political irrecon-

cilability and mental vulnerability. Lenin said in 1922: "Retreat is a difficult matter, especially for revolutionaries who are accustomed to advance; especially when they have been accustomed to advance with enormous success for several years; especially if they are surrounded by revolutionaries in other countries who are longing for the time when they can launch an offensive. Seeing that we are retreating, several of them burst into tears in a disgraceful and childish manner, as was the case at the last extended Plenary Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International."¹

But the pessimistic mood did not reflect the actual state of affairs, inasmuch as the shoots of socialism were becoming stronger and stronger thanks to NEP. "Outwardly Russia must leave a depressing impression on anyone sympathising with communism," wrote the Danish author Martin Andersen Nexø who visited Soviet Russia in 1922, and then added: "In effect, Soviet Russia as a socialist state is now incomparably more powerful than it was two years ago and incomparably more communistic in its principles."² The NEPmen who gave so much material for Zoshchenko, Ehrenburg, Ilf and Petrov and other writers, disappeared as fast as they had appeared. And side by side with them new people emerged, people who determined the future of the new society.

PRACTICAL SOCIALISATION OF PRODUCTION

There was no future for the NEPmen because the commanding heights in the economy—large-scale industry, banks, finance and credit—were at all times in the hands of the state.

Some politically short-sighted people regarded the closure or denationalisation of individual factories and

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 380-81.

² *Through the Eyes of Foreigners*, 1932, p. 184 (in Russian).

mills, the return of small and tiny enterprises, whose nationalisation had been proclaimed but not effected, to their former owners as a sign of the economic defeat of socialism. In actual fact, however, everything was the other way round. All these measures were a component part of the state's long-term socio-economic policy of creating the economic foundation of socialism. And if by October 1921 the number of state-owned factories and other industrial enterprises dropped to 4,500 (12 per cent of the former number), the average number of their personnel, on the other hand, increased by more than seven-fold, from 38 to 268, striking evidence of a sharp, positive shift in the concentration of labour power. At the same time there was only an insignificant drop in employment in the state sector of industry, from 1,400,000 to 1,200,000 people.

➤ Mere nationalisation does not automatically lead to socialisation of production in the full sense of the word. First of all it was necessary to master this production, to ascertain and utilise its reserves and place it at the service of social development. And while under War Communism this could not be done because priority attention was focused on the country's defence, NEP, which began precisely with the consolidation of the nationalised sector, paved the way for the solution of all these problems.

With commodity-money relations firmly established state-run enterprises had to either fully or partially withdraw from the centralised system of supply and marketing, operate with a certain degree of autonomy and switch to a self-supporting basis. Thus, NEP gave rise to a new method of economic management—through economically independent units which had to function with an adequate degree of efficiency, i.e., not only to manufacture specific types of commodities but also to reduce production costs to a minimum so as to be assured of profit, among other things. In this connection Lenin noted that "in the near future this (form of economic

management. — Y. A.) is bound to become the predominant, if not the sole, form of state enterprise"¹ in the Soviet economy. His prevision came true twice, in the 1920s and recently when the reform in the system of management of the Soviet economy was based on economic methods, above all on such a lever as profit.

Reporting on the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, made the point that in the NEP period Lenin "worked out the principles of socialist economic management that have fully retained their significance to this day. The Leninist principles of combining centralised planning with the promotion of popular initiative, of utilising commodity-money relations, cost accounting and material incentives with the interests of every worker individually, continue to underlie the Party's economic policy".²

Historian E. B. Genkina who studied archival materials described the situation in which this principle of cost accounting was elaborated and concretised. Economists in the Supreme Economic Council, guided by Lenin's approach, criticised the petty patronage of production from the centre, which had become a practice in the preceding years and which "fettered the initiative of the factory administration towards everything that was on the factory's grounds; even waste, even rejects could not be used otherwise than in conformity with a preset programme drawn up in a proper place".³ It was then that people began to speak about the need to "emancipate industry".

On Lenin's proposal the Government permitted state-run enterprises to enter into direct commercial relations with state-owned and private enterprises and with private

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 185.

² L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, Moscow, 1972, p. 17.

³ See E. B. Genkina, *V. I. Lenin's Governmental Activity*, pp. 210-11 (in Russian).

individuals. They were allowed to sell a portion of their output and purchase whatever commodities they needed for production purposes and for the personal use of their workers and employees. At the same time they were obliged to hand over to the state not more than 50 per cent of their output and were granted the right to employ as many people as were needed, to manoeuvre freely with the wage fund and, in particular, to assign up to 10 per cent of the fund to award bonuses to the best workers. They were also allowed to shift centralised allocations from one heading to another, but not to exceed their total volume of expenditures. Finally, they had the right to build ancillary enterprises to serve their workers and employees.

Some of these rights (the last one, for example) were granted because of the acute shortage of basic consumer goods and services characteristic of that period. On the whole, however, the complex of the rights granted to state enterprises during NEP was quite modern even according to present-day standards.

The regional bodies of economic management, the economic councils which were placed in control of a large number of industrial enterprises, also invigorated their activity. This by no means signified a return to the practice of disuniting the country's economic life as was the case in the first few months after the October Revolution. The Government wanted to combine the local economic initiative with an adequate degree of centralisation. And Lenin, who, as we have seen, was resolutely opposed to parochialism, called for the utmost flexibility in economic management. As regards the relationships between government and economic bodies at the middle level, he wrote: "This is hardly the time to try to reduce these relationships to a set of regulations, for experience is still very short and any such attempt might result in purely bureaucratic exercise. It is far more appropriate to allow practice to determine initially the most suitable

form of relationship. . . . Let these forms be at first not absolutely stable: variety is desirable, useful and even necessary to enable us to make a more precise study of the various systems of relationships."¹

The financial and economic independence of state enterprises eliminated the need for the system of central boards and the latter were replaced by trusts, associations of similar or interconnected enterprises. The trusts were granted full economic and financial independence, including the right to issue long-term loans in the form of bonds. The Supreme Economic Council was reorganised into a co-ordinating centre without the right to interfere in the current operations of trusts and enterprises, and the overstaffed managerial apparatus was considerably reduced.

The trust boards appointed directors to their enterprises and kept them under ever more rigid control. At first, in view of the shortage of resources and the weakness of the production base, the establishment of trusts, which made it possible to concentrate effort and means, seemed to be particularly expedient. But as the enterprises improved their efficiency, their management began to feel the burden of the excessive control on the part of the trusts. The impression was that they had merely replaced the central boards. In the final count the state enterprises, the majority of which had been united into trusts, were unable to introduce economic accounting into practice. And that made it necessary to adopt additional measures to deconcentrate economic management to an even greater degree and extend the rights of factory administrations.

In conditions of free trade the rejection of the centralised system of central boards and the granting of financial and economic independence to industrial enterprises gave rise to another danger—the domination of the market. To counter it the trusts were united into supply and market-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 380-81.

ing syndicates which acted independently in the market. The Supreme Economic Council regulated the activity of both the large trusts and syndicates. The latter, incidentally, were often carried away by the market element to such an extent that time and again they were on the verge of losing sight of the general targets of economic development.

Similar problems cropped up during a discussion of the economic policy of the trusts. In their drive for maximum profits (which guaranteed them high bonuses and premiums) some of their directors artificially inflated the prices of their commodities, froze the workers' wages and at times engaged in illegal speculation. This was due to the temporary change in the socio-political composition of trust boards which came to include not only bourgeois experts who knew how to organise production but also smart dealers of the NEPman type. The Party was worried about the decreasing proportion of Communists and people with a working-class background in the economic administration (particularly in the management of small factories and associations), and also the utilitarian trends in it. The Thirteenth Party Conference (1924) rejected the orientation towards maximum profits without consideration whether they were derived by paying workers lower wages, or through an inequitable exchange with the countryside, or by raising the efficiency of production. The Party and the trade union press also sharply criticised some economic executives for their bourgeois misinterpretation of the aims of production.

This experience of trustification is exceptionally topical in the light of the April 1973 resolution of the CC CPSU and the USSR Council of Ministers authorising the transition to a two- and three-echelon industrial administration, envisaging the dissolution of head offices and the organisation of large production associations, the very idea, but naturally not the scale, of which in many respects resembled the trusts of the 1920s.

In order to strengthen the centralising principle in the economy the Government set up the State Planning Committee (Gosplan). Its programme and apparatus rested on the reliable foundation of a long-term plan worked out by the GOELRO (Government Commission for the Electrification of Russia), which was not confined to electrification alone, but also contained provisions for large-scale industrialisation of the country. Lenin attached so much importance to the plan that he characterised it as the Party's second programme. The Gosplan was authorised to formulate current and then long-term sectoral and state economic development plans. Its functions also included the co-ordination of the programmes of various departments and territorial economic bodies in order to "*eliminate all the obviously irrational, all that clearly contradicts the state economic plan*".¹ The entire state industry without exception was to work according to plan, which also took into account the results of the activity of all sectors of the economy, including the private capitalist one. Planning methods were improved: directive methods of administration were gradually combined with the levers of commodity-money relations which were coming to play a steadily increasing role.

The work performed by the Gosplan cleared the way for elaboration of the first Soviet five-year plans; moreover, many other countries, not only socialist ones, which realised the importance and expediency of centralised planning, drew upon its experience.

In effect, NEP was the proletarian state's economic policy aimed at building a socialist society, but pursued under commodity-money relations. "Market plus plan—such is NEP's formula,"² wrote S. Strumilin. At the same

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 201.

² S. Strumilin, *At the Frontline of Planning*, Moscow, 1958, p. 333 (in Russian).

time NEP was not simply the sum of these two elements; it was a result of their complex interaction characterised by both confrontation and co-operation.

NEP: THE LEVER OF INDUSTRIALISATION

At the outset, NEP was designed to rehabilitate and balance the economy and in that period it played a stabilising and not a re-organising role. The Party, however, did not regard NEP as an aim in itself, but as a lever to build a large-scale modern industry and re-organise agriculture. On the other hand, the industrialisation launched by the socialist state restricted the development of the private capitalist sector and made for its complete disappearance in the future. "If we have electrification within 10 to 20 years," Lenin observed in this connection, "there is nothing to fear from the individualism of the small farmer and his unrestricted trade in local exchange. If we have not electrification, a return to capitalism is inevitable in any case."¹

In spite of the famine and enormous difficulties there was an increase, although a very small one, in the output of the state-owned industry in the very first year of NEP. Beginning with 1922 and 1923 the growth rates increased, and in 1926 industrial production for the first time since the revolution exceeded the prewar level. But this growth was achieved primarily as a result of the rehabilitation of the existing enterprises and therefore could not continue indefinitely. New capacities, new enterprises, new industries were needed. The industrialisation slogan was advanced by the Fourteenth Party Congress in December 1925, when Lenin was no longer alive. The Plenary Session of the Central Committee (April 1926) stressed that "the development of industry and the industrialisation

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 323.

of the country in general is the decisive task whose fulfilment will determine the further growth of the economy as a whole along the road to the victory of socialism".¹

In order to safeguard the country's economic independence and her very existence it was necessary to begin industrialisation by building a modern heavy industry to manufacture the means of production. This objective could be achieved with the least loss of time by curtailing the development of the light industry and the output of consumer goods. However, the general mood of the working class was such that it faced privations without resentment and even with enthusiasm. It was this line that made it possible to do away with unemployment and eliminate the disproportion in favour of the light industry that existed in the initial period of NEP. And the fact that the Soviet people's victory in the war against the nazi invaders was ensured by the military-industrial base of the USSR showed that their privations had not been in vain.

The Party did not intend to carry through industrialisation at the expense of the countryside. Indicative in this respect were the events of 1922-1923 when an unexpected "sales crisis" gripped the country: the peasants stopped purchasing manufactured goods in spite of their acute need in them. Large quantities of unsold commodities accumulated in factory storehouses. The reason was the sharp increase in the price gap between industrial goods and agricultural products to the latter's detriment. For instance, in 1913 the peasant could obtain one arshin² of calico print in exchange for only four pounds³ of flour, while in 1922 and 1923 he had to give 28 pounds, or seven times as much. Prices of other consumer manufactures did not rise as high as of fabrics, but in general the price index

¹ CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 3, p. 313.

² Arshin, a measure of length formerly used in Russia, equal to 71.12 centimetres.

³ Russian pound is an old measure of weight equal to 409.51 grammes (40 pounds = 1 pood).

on manufactures as compared to agricultural produce increased threefold. This was due not only to objective reasons (much quicker recovery in agriculture and high demand for manufactured goods), but also to the inexperience of state financial and trading bodies. "Leftist" economists proposed that the state should orientate itself on a non-equivalent exchange between town and country, but the Government preferred a different path. It quickly lowered the prices on manufactures; the "sales crisis" was surmounted and profits from industrial production increased.

When the question of the sources of industrialisation came up for discussion, the Trotskyite Preobrazhensky published an article in the Party press which caused quite a stir. As the economic spokesman of the "Left" opposition, he called for the exploitation of the pre-socialist forms of economy, small-commodity agricultural production above all. The latter, according to him, was to become the main source of accumulation for the country's industrialisation. He regarded the exploitation of the countryside (by raising taxes, raising prices on consumer goods, etc.) as the law of primary socialist accumulation. But the Fourteenth Party Congress turned down these and similar ideas advanced by the "Left" opposition, and decided to obtain the means for industrialisation primarily in industry itself.

IMPROVEMENT OF LABOUR ORGANISATION

The extensive development of commodity-money relations wrought important changes in labour relations. Labour conscription was repealed, although not all at once, but in phases, and labour armies were disbanded. In April 1921 a decree was promulgated removing all the basic restrictions preventing people from changing their place of employment. All this was directly in the interests of the working people.

The recovery of industry gradually restored the working class. In 1925 and 1926 the number of industrial workers was almost equal to the 1913 figure, and 97.4 per cent of them were employed at state and co-operative enterprises. The working class increased in size mainly because it was replenished by working people who returned to their old jobs and by the children of the old regular workers. For the time being peasants who came to cities in search of work accounted for about 25 per cent of the working-class growth rate, and agrarian overpopulation was very considerable.

Unemployment, the aftermath of capitalism, war and economic dislocation, still existed in towns and reached its peak in January 1924 when there were 1,240,000 jobless. Skilled industrial workers were practically unaffected by unemployment, which dealt the heaviest blow at office workers who had been discharged following the reduction of the state apparatus, and also the unskilled workers. In the latter half of the 1920s unemployment began to decline and as a result of rapid industrial development disappeared altogether.

The average wage level of the workers, which at the end of the War Communism period was less than a third of the prewar figure began to rise immediately after the shift to the New Economic Policy. In the mid-1920s it surpassed the prewar level (1913) by 34 per cent. At the same time the working day was shortened considerably, the system of annual paid holidays, which had not existed in tsarist Russia, became firmly established. Food supplies for the working people improved. Between 1922 and 1927 the absolute consumption of meat increased five times, milk—two times, butter—2.4 times, eggs—25 times, sugar—5.6 times, tea and coffee—4.7 times, wheat flour—4.5 times, while that of rye bread dropped 2.9 times. Thus, the introduction of NEP made it possible to revive the working class, restore its strength and then seriously improve its living standard. These facts overturn the

conclusion of foreign historians that NEP was a policy of concessions to the peasants at the expense of the proletariat.¹

Payment in kind was gradually replaced by monetary remuneration, and although the Tenth Party Congress (March 1921) reaffirmed the equalitarian principle of labour remuneration, it was repealed in the autumn of the same year. It turned out that the equalitarian principle, which formerly seemed so promising, actually retarded the growth of labour productivity and hindered socialist emulation. A system of wages was introduced under which labour was remunerated according to a person's skill and profession. The Government advanced the following reason for promulgating a relevant decree: "We shall no longer see engineers holding the jobs of senior stablemen or heads of food distribution departments or mending kitchen utensils and hot-water bottles, nor shall we see skilled workers planting potatoes or cleaning out cesspits,"² thus putting an end to the economically unjustified expenditure of qualified labour on the performance of simple jobs. The principle of material and moral incentives to work was applied in an increasing variety of forms, and the wage of each worker was made directly dependent on his output.

The increase in wages was not unaccompanied by collisions. At first, in view of the fact that priority was given to the development of the light industry the main detachments of the working class, metal workers in particular, found themselves in a less advantageous position than, say, the workers employed in the food, tobacco or textile industries. Many workers were indignant over the high salaries of specialists.

¹ See E. H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, New York, 1959, Vol. VI, Part II, p. 311.

² Quoted from E. B. Genkina, *V. I. Lenin's Governmental Activity*, p. 230.

In order to regulate the wages it was necessary at times to arrest their growth with the consent of the trade unions. Nevertheless, economic problems sometimes gave rise to labour conflicts and even engendered strikes not only at privately owned but even at state enterprises. Up to the autumn of 1922 there were 102 strikes involving 43,000 people. The basic causes were of a purely local nature—delays in the payment of wages, violations of collective agreements and so on, which stemmed not so much from the general economic policy as from the activity of individual economic executives. Taking into account, however, that these 102 strikes were preceded by 4,054 labour conflicts which were resolved by reconciliation bodies, the number of strikes was insignificant.

The Party openly acknowledged the dissatisfaction of some sections of the workers and realised that their economic struggle would continue "until the electrification of industry and agriculture is completed, at least in the main, and until the roots of small-scale farming and the domination of the market are cut". At the same time this resolution of the Eleventh Congress of the RCP(B) stated: "Neither the Communist Party, nor Soviet power, nor the trade unions should under any circumstances forget or conceal from the workers and the working masses the fact that resort to strikes in a state with a proletarian authority can be explained and justified exclusively by bureaucratic distortion of the substance of the proletarian state and all sorts of survivals of the capitalist past in its institutions, on the one hand, and the political immaturity and cultural backwardness of the working masses, on the other."¹

With the appearance of a whole system of bodies concerned with guiding the country's economic activity, it became necessary to determine the role and place of the trade unions in this field. It was considered definitely

¹ CPSU in Resolutions. . . , Vol. 2, p. 320.

harmful and impermissible to have the trade unions interfere directly in the administration of factories and other enterprises. This did not mean, however, that the trade unions were wholly debarred from the organisation and administration of the economy. They continued to participate, with the right to vote, in the work of bodies concerned with regulating and planning economic development. As before, they nominated candidates to leading economic posts. And it was through the trade unions that the new contingents of the working class acquired experience in economic management and political activity. This was the meaning contained in a resolution of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) which was written by Lenin: "Being a school of communism in general, the trade unions must, in particular, be a school (not an organ. — Y. A.) for training the whole mass of workers, and eventually all working people, in the art of managing socialist industry (and gradually also agriculture)."¹

Lenin envisaged the possibility of sporadic conflicts over wages and the organisation of labour between workers' collectives and the factory managements if the latter adhered to narrow administrative or, as we would now say, technocratic positions. In such cases Lenin considered that the trade unions were duty-bound resolutely to uphold the interests of the workers.

As far back as November 1920, at the Fifth All-Russia Conference of Trade Unions, the Party raised the question of passing to broad democracy in the trade-union movement, that is, to the election of their leading bodies instead of the practice of appointing their members, and giving up the practices arising out of labour militarisation. But Trotsky with the backing of the minority of trade-union officials, who were anxious to keep the outdated military-bureaucratic methods alive, advanced the slogan of "shaking up" the trade-union leadership so as to get

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 190.

rid of all those who considered it necessary to put an end to the purely instrumentalist approach to the trade unions. Trotsky maintained that since Soviet Russia was a workers' state there was no sense in having a special body to protect their interests, in other words, he wanted to abolish the trade unions altogether.

Trotsky's stand elicited a strong reaction from the "Workers' Opposition", a group representing the opposite extreme. Referring to the Party Programme it demanded that the management of the national economy be transferred to an "all-Russia producers' congress", i.e., to the trade unions. And although the "Workers' Opposition" appeared to be Trotsky's antipode, the substance of the proposals advanced by these two wings amounted to a return to the old, outdated methods.

Lenin and the majority of the Political Bureau opposed both extremes and pointed out that Trotsky's approach to the question led to the liquidation of Soviet power (since it undermined the principle of broad democracy underlying the activity of the Soviets), while the syndicalist deviation tended to result in the liquidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat (because it envisaged the abolition of centralised administration of the country).

THE GROWING ROLE OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA

The fusion of the foremost representatives of the old intelligentsia who had placed their knowledge and experience at the service of Soviet power, the professional revolutionaries of the "old Guard" and gifted young people from among the broadest sections of the population who had passed through a unique school of life in the course of the revolution and the civil war into a single new, socialist intelligentsia began during the last years of Lenin's life. A qualitatively new intelligentsia, with new social features, began to take shape. The new,

socialist intelligentsia could not be regarded as an ancillary force which was hired for high wages, or only as consultants who in fact fulfilled technical functions, but as one of the basic elements of the new social system.

Most interesting in this connection were Lenin's views about the GOELRO and then the Gosplan where qualified experts from the old intelligentsia worked side by side with prominent Bolshevik revolutionaries. Although qualifying them as bourgeois experts, Lenin as early as the beginning of 1921 advised the Communists employed in planning agencies to learn from them. He spoke of the need to respect "the efficient 'specialists in science and technology'", and demanded that Communists help them to enlarge their political outlook "on the basis of achievements in their particular field, always bearing in mind that the engineer's way to communism is *different* from that of the underground propagandist and the writer; he is guided along *by the evidence of his own science*, so that the agronomist, the forestry expert, etc., each have *their own path* to tread towards communism."¹ Here Lenin definitely referred to the prospect of a part of the bourgeois intelligentsia going over to the side of the builders of socialism.

Almost two years later, Lenin dictated a special note, one of his last works, on the need to allow the Gosplan (State Planning Committee), a strictly "intellectual" institution, to make decisions in the economic sphere. Lenin's new attitude to the possibilities and functions of the emerging socialist intelligentsia was manifested in the very title of the memorandum—"Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Committee". Saying that it was necessary "to take a step towards extending the competence of the State Planning Committee", he justifies his proposal by saying that "as a body of experienced people, experts, representatives of science and technology, it (the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 144.

Gosplan.—*Ed.*) is actually in a better position to form a correct judgement of affairs".¹

Fully aware of the fact that "the overwhelming majority of scientists who naturally make up the Committee, are inevitably infected with bourgeois ideas and bourgeois prejudices", Lenin nevertheless envisaged their gradual transition to the socialist standpoint. It is easy to grasp the vast importance of these views for the current class struggle in capitalist countries as the intelligentsia comes to play a steadily increasing part in social development and assimilates anti-capitalist, socialist views.

But, of course, the old experts alone could not provide all the qualified personnel required by the rapidly developing country. The task of "learning, learning and learning" which Lenin advanced at the Third Congress of the Komsomol began to be translated into practice in the 1920s. A vast number of students graduated from institutions of higher learning and also from workers' faculties that had been set up in 1919 in order to provide young people exclusively from among the working class and the peasantry with an accelerated course of preparatory training for enrolment in institutions of higher learning. The new generation of intellectuals produced prominent leaders and experts who were responsible for the economic upbuilding in the course of the first five-year plans, for the creation of the defensive potential which ensured the Soviet Union's victory in the Great Patriotic War, and for the re-equipment of the Soviet economy in the course of the current scientific and technological revolution.

The Soviet cultural policy in the NEP period attached just as much importance to raising the general culture of the masses, which found expression above all in the elimination of illiteracy. Lenin set this task immediately

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 598.

after the October Revolution and also in his last articles written in 1922. Realising the urgency of this task he naturally gave it priority over the development of the theatre, poetry and other cultural requirements of a more elevated nature. Such an approach could well be emulated, for example, by the Third World countries in many of which there is a dangerous gap between ambitious large-scale projects and the low cultural level of the masses which stands in the way of their realisation.

NEP AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY

The country's rapid recovery and the end of the civil war paved the way for broad democratic development. "Electrification as a base for 'democracy'," Lenin noted on the eve of NEP.¹ This course found expression in the policy of "enlivening the Soviets" which was designed to accelerate the infusion of fresh blood into the administration of social life and make the Soviets much more accessible to the non-Party masses.

The Central Committee of the Party issued a special directive saying that it was necessary to increase the proportion of non-Party peasants in the executive bodies of the Soviets at all levels, including the national. Non-Party peasants were also co-opted into the boards of some People's Commissariats and one of them, V. Yakovenko, was appointed People's Commissar for Agriculture in 1922. On the other hand, the proportion of members or candidate members of the Party in government agencies, particularly at the lower level, diminished.

The foundation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December 1922 played an enormous part in

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 42, p. 380.

heightening the authority of the Soviets and consolidating Soviet statehood. The formation of the USSR was a historic event. It signified that Soviet power had fully triumphed not only in Russia but in her non-Russian fringelands. An All-Union Government—the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR—was formed which was no longer defined as an organ concerned with "the general administration of affairs" (1918 Constitution), but as an "executive and administrative organ". Lenin was the first Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

The policy of "enlivening the Soviets" rested on a strictly class foundation: under the USSR Constitution of 1924, bourgeois elements—people employing mainly hired labour and also former employees of pre-revolutionary organs of oppression—remained disfranchised. The unequal representation of town and country in the supreme organ of power—the All-Union Congress of Soviets—one deputy per 25,000 urban inhabitants and one per 125,000 inhabitants of gubernias with a predominantly rural population, remained in force.

Serious changes took place in the field of personal and property rights of citizens. In 1922, procurator's offices were vested with supervisory powers to ensure the strict observance of the law. The 1924 Constitution for the first time included sections on the USSR Supreme Court and the Procurator's Office. In the course of NEP period, civil, penal, labour, land and other codes were drawn up. In this way revolutionary legal consciousness was acquiring a normative character. Private property rights and even private enterprise were placed under legal protection. Some Party and government officials, who were still loth to scrap their War Communism ideas, considered the introduction of civil law as "disarmament of the revolution". But Lenin consistently pursued the new line, and when the People's Commissariat for Justice delayed the elaboration of a decree on "private property rights", he

reprimanded the People's Commissar for Justice.¹ He demanded that "the People's Court of the Republic should keep close watch over the activities of private traders and manufacturers, and, while prohibiting the slightest restriction of their activities, should sternly punish the slightest attempt on their part to evade rigid compliance with the laws of the Republic".² This two-in-one approach to Soviet law and justice—to ensure the observance of the law and to prevent it from being used to the detriment of the socialist system—is demonstrated with particular force in Lenin's notes relating to the drafting of the Civil Code. "We allow you to trade and make money, but insist that you be *thrice* as honest, that you submit truthful and exact accounts, that you abide not only by the letter but also by the *spirit* of our, communist legislation, that you do not allow the *slightest* departure from our laws—that is what the P.C.J. should adopt as its main commandment in respect of NEP," so as to make "our capitalism 'disciplined' and 'decent'..."³ Furthermore, Lenin considered it necessary to make it legally possible to nullify all agreements and private deals which not only clash with the letter of the law but also with the interests of the masses of workers and peasants. What Lenin had in mind was not a slavish imitation of the bourgeois civil law but restricting it in the spirit of Soviet law without inhibiting economic or commercial activity.⁴

The sphere of activity of emergency penal bodies which had played a vastly important role in the years of the revolution was also restricted. On Lenin's proposal the Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets in December 1921 instructed the All-Russia Central Executive Committee

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 54, p. 222.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 180.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 564.

⁴ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 44, p. 401.

to revise within the shortest time possible the status of the organs of the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counter-revolution and Sabotage (Cheka) with a view to narrowing their competence.¹ On February 6, 1922, a decree was passed on the reorganisation of the Cheka into the Main Political Administration (GPU) whose principal job was to fight against particularly dangerous state crimes—political and economic counter-revolution, espionage and banditry. But it was deprived of the right to enforce repressions against criminals on its own accord. The trial of all cases, including those investigated by the GPU, was placed solely within the competence of the courts. A special article in the new Constitution made the Supreme Procurator's Office responsible for supervising the activity of the GPU.

"In this way the Red terror which had been launched in response to the White terror was brought to an end. "The closer we approach conditions of unshakable and lasting power and the more trade develops," Lenin said, "the more imperative it is to put forward the firm slogan of greater revolutionary legality, and the narrower becomes the sphere of activity of the institution which matches the plotters blow for blow."²

The leading role of the proletariat and its Party continued to enhance, the position of the Bolsheviks as the only Party exercising political power in the country had found appropriate state-legal formalisation. The Party resolutely cut short all attempts to restore in one form or another petty-bourgeois parties which the counter-revolutionary forces could use to further their aims. Addressing the Mensheviks and SRs, Lenin declared: "Either you refrain from expressing your views, or, if you insist on

¹ See *Congresses of RSFSR Soviets in Decisions and Resolutions*, pp. 221-22 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 176-77.

expressing your political views ... then you will only have yourself to blame if we treat you as the worst and most pernicious whiteguard elements."¹

"THESE ARE THE TASKS THAT I DREAM OF..."²

This phrase taken from Lenin's last article vividly manifests his utter dedication to the country, the Party and the world proletarian revolution. His last works were based on his quest for and his thoughts about the future prospects of the development of the socialist state. Although all of them had a direct bearing on the situation in the country at that time, their subject matter and significance by far transcended the historical limits of the NEP period. In these articles he considered fundamental problems of the development of socialist society, the same problems which today too face the Soviet Union and other countries advancing in the same direction.

Judging by his last works, it is clear that as head and founder of the new state and new society, he was always concerned with making the state as effective as possible. Underlining that its formation alone was matter of enormous importance, Lenin was by no means inclined to idealise the way it functioned. "The art of administration does not descend from heaven," he wrote, "it is not inspired by the Holy Ghost. And the fact that a class is the leading class does not make it at once capable of administering."³ In other words, the progressive nature of the state of the proletariat does not automatically result in the efficient functioning of all its links.

That accounts for the fact that in his last works Lenin concentrated on how to improve the mechanism of the new

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 283.

² *Ibid.*, p. 502.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, p. 457.

state and the administration of the country. When the war was on, this problem, as we have seen, was resolved by methods in which extraeconomic coercion outweighed persuasion. The situation changed completely in the period of peaceful development. That was why in the 1920s Lenin so frequently pointed out that persuasion was much more important than coercion and stressed that in such periods "the 'pivot' of Soviet policy is organisation, accounting and control, a slow, cautious and businesslike approach to practical tasks..."¹

Lenin subjected the Soviet state apparatus to sharp and impartial criticism, that was not an aim in itself, but a means of making the Soviet system function efficiently and rationally, as well as of ensuring its genuinely socialist democratic character. Modern sociological literature in the West and certain trends in the mass movements regard rationalism and democracy as two mutually excluding extremes: in their quest for democracy and humanistic morals, Left-wing intellectuals and mutinous young people are ready to reject all the gains of the scientific and technological revolution, while the advocates of technocratic rationalism believe in the imminent division of citizens into the ruling professional "clite" and a passive mass, the object of the former's decisions. Lenin would have rejected this alternative as unthinkable, for in his opinion the task was to find forms of combining rationality with democracy.

At first the general opinion was that revolutionary cadres would find no difficulty in discarding the old bureaucratic methods and habits. But as life showed, these habits proved to be tenacious and capable of adapting themselves to the changing conditions. The Eighth Congress of the Party noted the fact that many Party members who had been given jobs in government bodies to a very considerable extent had got out of touch with

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 345.

the masses and become contaminated with the evils of bureaucracy, and that the same could be said of many workers, members of the Soviets. In this respect the pernicious role of vector of the bureaucratic contagion, and source of "rot and decay" was played by philistine and semi-philistine elements—money-grubbers and career-seekers who had infiltrated the ruling party for the sole purpose of using their authoritative title of Party member to further their selfish interests.

Many Soviet employees recruited from among the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sections of the population introduced a spirit of inertness into the atmosphere of the new, Soviet institutions. The old bureaucratic practices were masked by a new jargon and new customs and were adapted to the latter, thus producing the social type of Soviet philistine. Nonetheless, these practices constituted a very real threat to the revolutionary democratic spirit of the new system.

In addition to the democratisation of the state apparatus and purges of the Party, self-defence against the bureaucratic contagion included the abolition of economic privileges enjoyed by Party members. Lenin proposed, and the Ninth All-Russia Party Conference (1920) decided to draw up concrete measures to put an end to inequality (in living conditions, remuneration, etc.) between experts, Party and state officials, on the one hand, and the working masses, on the other, because it infringed democracy, eroded the Party and impaired the authority of the Communists. Two years later, however, the Twelfth Party Conference decided to improve the material condition of active Party workers who totalled some 15,000 throughout the country. On the other hand, in order at least partially to rectify the material inequality in the Party, the Communists were forbidden to participate in the profits of enterprises. But even then the Thirteenth Party Conference drew attention to the sharp discrepancy in the material condition of the Party members and so-called "excesses"

in the way of life, while the joint plenary session of the CC and the Central Control Commission on the proposal of the Political Bureau summoned the Party to intensify its struggle against "excesses" and the corrupting influence of NEP on some elements in the Party.¹

The Party and Lenin regarded the fact that the Party was the ruling force in the country as a great responsibility, as the duty of all its members to be always in the forefront and shoulder the most difficult tasks. Not only was this duty incompatible with the materially privileged position of Party members, but also with their immunity to criticism for errors which they might commit and to severe punishment for violating the law. Characteristic in this connection was Lenin's stand against the adoption of a draft law under which the Communists would enjoy judicial immunity without the sanction of their Party organisations. The CC Political Bureau with Lenin's participation demanded in November 1921 that the People's Commissariat for Justice should increase the responsibility of Communists for crimes, so as to remove every possibility of exploiting the Party's ruling position as a shield from responsibility.

As a self-contained force, as a system of myths divorced from reality but which nonetheless enslave this reality, bureaucracy was rooted in the voluntaristic recklessness of those revolutionaries who thought that anything could be rebuilt at will. This recklessness, as we have already seen, was present during the "revolutionary attack on capital"; it manifested itself with particular force in connection with the centralisation tendencies in War Communism. That was why Lenin qualified bureaucracy as a legacy of the "siege",² in other words, of the civil war and the fight against foreign interventionists, and the Party noted at its Tenth Congress that the centralisation of the war period

¹ CPSU in Resolutions..., Vol. 2, pp. 500, 502.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 352.

"promoted the tendency of turning it into a bureaucracy and breaking away from the masses".¹ But divorced as it was from multifaceted reality, trust in the omnipotence of *a priori* decisions at the top remained alive, although in new forms, even after the civil war. That accounted for the fact that in his official correspondence in 1921 and 1922 Lenin time and again demanded fewer general resolutions and more generalisation of concrete experience and verification of the fulfilment of assignments. "The general phrases are nauseating. They breed bureaucracy and encourage it. . . . Bureaucracy is throttling us precisely because we are still playing with 'instructions in the form of decrees'," he wrote in connection with Preobrazhensky's theses, and went on to say: "This whole section is bad. Commonplaces. Phrases. Pious wishes that everybody is sick of. It is typical of contemporary 'communist bureaucracy'".²

Contemporary Western researchers of a technocratic cast of mind consider that bureaucratisation is an inevitable phenomenon which no revolution can eliminate. One of them, Michel Crozier, writes: "The crisis only temporarily ruptures the bureaucratic order but does not destroy it. . . . As soon as the period of the fusion of structures comes to an end the general urge and demand for order, planning and regulating very swiftly results in a new bureaucratic order which is merely the transportation of the old to the level of adaptation which is more adequate to the environment."³ Crozier, however, fails to take account of the fact that in a revolutionary society the threat of bureaucratic evils engenders a sharp counteraction.

The main thing was that a state of a new type, a new, genuinely democratic organisation of society created by the revolution, was existing and developing, and that the

¹ CPSU in Resolutions. . . , Vol. 2, p. 208.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 239.

³ Michel Crozier, *La Société bloquée*, Paris, 1970, p. 149.

shortcomings in the functioning of the machinery of state were due to the fact that the country was advancing along an unexplored road. Lenin made this point in his report at the Eleventh RCP(B) Congress, the last congress at which he spoke. "For hundreds of years," he said, "states have been built according to the bourgeois model, and for the first time a non-bourgeois form of state has been discovered. Our machinery of government may be faulty, but it is said that the first steam engine that was invented was also faulty. No one even knows whether it worked or not, but that is not the important point; the important point is that it was invented. Even assuming that the first steam engine was of no use, that fact is that we now have steam engines. Even if our machinery of government is very faulty, the fact remains that it has been created; the greatest invention in history has been made; a proletarian type of state has been created. Therefore . . . the workers all over the world are still drawn towards the Soviet state."¹

If Lenin did criticise the shortcomings of the Soviet apparatus it was only to achieve its radical improvement. His positive criticism of the Soviet machinery of government found expression in what was truly an aphoristic formula: "We should have perished long ago but for the 'apparatus'. Unless we wage a systematic and persevering struggle to improve it we shall perish before we manage to lay the foundation of socialism."²

Lenin deluded neither himself nor the Party into believing that bureaucracy would be wiped out very quickly, and often warned that it would require a whole epoch. At the same time new efforts made it possible to view the future with optimism. The decentralisation of economic management and the heightening of the organising role of national planning, the unfettering of the economic initiative of the producers, the organisation of normal economic

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 301.

² Ibid., Vol. 32, pp. 321-22.

life and the rising welfare and culture of the masses gradually cut the ground from under the feet of the specifically Russian type of bureaucracy. "In our country," Lenin wrote, "bureaucratic practices have different economic roots, namely, the atomised and scattered state of the small producer with his poverty, illiteracy, lack of culture, the absence of roads and exchange between agriculture and industry, the absence of connection and interaction between them."¹ It was NEP and the ensuing development that were designed to stamp out all these chronic ills.

As he wrote *The State and Revolution* Lenin believed that the economic factors which would lead to the disappearance of bureaucracy were, first, socialisation of banks, large-scale industry, transport, etc., and second, a genuine cultural revolution which would teach the masses how to administer the state.² It turned out, however, that a third factor was necessary, namely, the normalisation of relations with the peasants. Therefore the New Economic Policy, one of whose elements was encouragement of private enterprise, proved to be a way of wiping out bureaucracy.

Only ever closer, stimulating and manifold links with the masses ensuring the profound democratic nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat could deprive bureaucracy of its nutrient soil. Lenin emphasised this thought in practically all his works written in the 1920s. He wrote down the following, now widely known and widely quoted rule of political behaviour of the leaders:

"Live in the *midst* of the people.

"Know their *sentiments*.

"Know *everything*.

"Understand the masses.

"Find the correct approach.

"Win their *absolute* confidence.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 351.

² See *ibid.*, Vol. 25, pp. 472-75.

"The leaders ought not to divorce themselves from the masses they lead, the vanguard from the entire army of labour."¹

An example of how Lenin translated these rules into life was the replacement of the head of the Central Board of the Donbas Coal-mining Industry. In the initial period after the civil war this board headed by Y. L. Pyatakov (who later joined the Trotskyite opposition) played an important part in boosting production at large coal pits and thus helped the country to overcome the fuel crisis. But Pyatakov who was inclined to administer by sheer injunction resorted to military-bureaucratic methods and suppressed the initiative of the local Party and trade-union organisations, thus provoking protests on their part. At a conference of Ukrainian Communists in December 1921 his methods came under heavy criticism from Donbas delegates and as a result he was removed from his post.

Upholding the criticism levelled at Pyatakov, Lenin observed: "... Our administration and our politics rest on the ability of the entire vanguard to maintain contact with the entire mass of the proletariat and with the entire mass of the peasantry. If anybody forgets these cogs and becomes wholly absorbed in administration, the result will be a disastrous one."²

Characteristic was Lenin's attitude to the "Workers' Opposition" which emerged in that period and came out under the banner of struggle against bureaucracy. Sharply critical of the group's deviation towards syndicalism, Lenin nevertheless characterised its anti-bureaucratic trend and orientation on "the enlistment of the greatest number of fresh and young forces and the promotion of local workers to more responsible posts" as "extremely

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 44, p. 497.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 299.

sound aspirations, trend and programme".¹ That was why the Tenth Congress which condemned the political behaviour of the "Workers' Opposition" found it necessary to draw constructive conclusions from its proposals.

The spirit of direct democracy inherited from the Paris Commune had to be embodied, alongside the Soviets, in such a unique institution as the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. And although this institution was set up to combat bureaucracy and raise the efficiency of administration, it proved to be even more ineffective than any other state agency. Lenin, already seriously ill, drew up a plan for reorganising the commissariat on the basis of its broadest contact with the masses. This plan is set forth in Lenin's two last articles "How We Should Reorganise the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection" and "Better Fewer, but Better". The second article was dated March 2, 1923, and on March 10 Lenin suffered a cerebral haemorrhage which completely incapacitated him for the remaining months of his life.

The central point of the plan was the merger of the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection with the Central Control Commission, an organ of inner-Party control, so as, on the one hand, to give maximum authority to the working people's control over the government machinery, and on the other, to bind the Party as closely as possible with the masses and thus provide it with every opportunity to have a timely and unerring knowledge of the aspirations of the people.

Lenin's proposals to enlarge the composition of the Party Central Committee were also connected with the implementation of this plan. In his opinion, this enlargement (up to 50-100 people, whereas the Eleventh Congress of the Party in 1922 elected a Central Committee consisting of 27 members and 19 alternate members) was to be achieved by electing rank-and-file Party members from

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 423.

among the workers "of a lower stratum than those promoted in the last five years to work in Soviet bodies".¹ The duty of the new CC members would be to conduct a scrupulous and careful study of the Soviet machinery of state in all its ramifications, with a view to keeping it under control from the standpoint of socialist democracy and improving its work. A few months earlier he sharply and in no uncertain terms criticised the composition of the highest executive body of the Soviets, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (ACEC), because officials made up a vast majority of its members. Lenin proposed that the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the Party and then the Congress of Soviets should adopt a decision under which "no less than 60 per cent of the members of the ACEC should be workers and peasants not occupying official posts in government bodies".²

Lenin looked upon the most capable and active workers dedicated to socialist ideals as one of the two bulwarks of a rational and at the same time democratic Party and state machinery. The second bulwark, or the second catalyst of the effective administration, were to be highly qualified experts from among the intelligentsia. In his last article Lenin defined these two bulwarks as the "best elements that we have in our social system—such as, first, the advanced workers, and, second, the really enlightened elements for whom we can vouch that they will not take the word for the deed, and will not utter a single word that goes against their conscience. . .".³

It proved possible to fulfil Lenin's behests thanks to the further democratisation of inner Party life and the strengthening of the Party's fighting capacity which were carried out in conformity with the decisions of the Tenth and subsequent Party congresses.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 597.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 42, p. 420.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 489.

The scientific organisation of management, as Lenin understood it, included four important elements: integrity, competency, efficiency and revolutionary spirit.

He indicated that people should be chosen from "a) the standpoint of honesty, b) from the political standpoint, c) business qualifications, d) executive capacity..."¹

At the same time he found it necessary to stress: "... No amount of conscientiousness or Party authoritativeness can make up for what, in this case, is the most important thing, namely, knowledge of one's business..."² He also wrote: "... Management necessarily implies competency, that a knowledge of all the conditions of production down to the last detail and of the latest technology of your branch of production is required; you must have a certain scientific training."³ It was essential, in his opinion, to use all the achievements of scientific thought in the country and abroad to attain the most rational and efficient organisation of socialist society.

What Lenin meant by efficiency was that a person should be fully capable of filling his post. He stressed that it was necessary to achieve a harmonious combination of various types of officials in one or another field, and that different tasks required different types of leaders. The question which Lenin always posed in his practical activity was whether a person had the necessary qualities to perform his duties effectively.

Upholding the need for efficiency Lenin did not have the stomach for empty talk. And his criticism of "communist decree-making" should be linked with his dislike of both general unrealistic projects and "bureaucratic utopias"⁴ based on thin air.

It is absolutely unreasonable to assert, however, as one of the leading US sociologists, Daniel Bell, does, that the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 243.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 42, p. 438.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, p. 428.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 497.

modern technocratic ideology is a continuation of Lenin's demand for efficiency,¹ because Lenin's approach to problems of administration was distinguished by another important quality, by its revolutionary character. He regarded the plan for improving the administration of the Party and the country, which found its reflection in his last works, as an element of the world revolutionary process. In his last article "Better Fewer, but Better" Lenin showed that the seemingly mundane problems relating to the reorganisation of the Soviet machinery of government were directly connected with prospects for the world revolution. Sharply and unequivocally denouncing the shortcomings attending the establishment of the new social system, Lenin at the same time showed that these shortcomings were a natural manifestation of the contradictions which give rise to any truly great revolution of the kind that took place in Russia. "And the more abrupt the revolution," he added, "the longer will many of these contradictions last."² Not dispassionate rationalism, but revolutionary fervour, not cold indifference to the ultimate objectives but revolutionary singleness of purpose, such were the features which distinguished Lenin and his style of work from the modern technocrats.

Being a true revolutionary, Lenin referred himself directly to the Party and the people openly acknowledging errors and warning against their repetition, regarding such straightforwardness and sincerity as an earnest of victory. "All the revolutionary parties that have perished so far," he wrote, "perished because they became conceited, because they failed to see the source of their strength and feared to discuss their weaknesses."³

During Lenin's lifetime the Party adopted important decisions concerning the radical improvement of the Party

¹ See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting*, New York, 1973, pp. 353-54.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 497.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 311.

and state apparatus. "During Lenin's lifetime and after his death the Party courageously and openly criticised, as it continues to do to this day, errors and shortcomings. It sternly denounced the personality cult, which led to violations of the Leninist norms of Party and state life, of socialist legality and democracy. It emphatically rejected subjectivism, which expounds unfounded improvisation in place of a scientific approach to phenomena of social life."¹ In conducting this vast transformatory work the Party has always been guided by Lenin's precepts.

THE TRUE AND THE IMAGINARY MEANING OF NEP

Summing up the results of this period, how are we to appraise NEP? What was it, a retreat or an advancement? Invigoration of capitalism, or the building of socialism?

The answer to these questions is not as simple as it may appear at first glance. It cannot be simply "Yes" or "No", for the historical meaning of NEP was both complicated and significant. A general appraisal of NEP should first and foremost rest on the nature of the basis and the superstructure. Their socialist character was unquestionable, for the social ownership of the means of production remained intact. The strengthening state sector in industry continued to be the most consistent embodiment of the socialist structure and constituted the economic nucleus of socialist development. Production relations in the countryside also developed in the socialist direction in view of the growth of co-operation and the changes which took place within it.

The superstructure in the period of the New Economic Policy also retained its socialist nature and in this respect continued to leave behind the basis. The development of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the further improvement of socialist democracy, the formation of the

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, p. 283.

multinational Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and, finally, the emergence of new social relations and socialist social thought, which received fresh impetus as a result of the end of the civil war proved that NEP actually helped the country to advance towards socialism in the course of which she simultaneously built the foundation for and raised the edifice of the new social system. It is therefore clear that the opinion that NEP was something in the sort of an alien element in socialist development, which is upheld by even the most serious bourgeois historians, is absolutely erroneous.¹

Some historical and economic works portray NEP as a sort of an "anomaly", as nothing more than a "retreat" from the highroad of socialist development. Their authors based their interpretation of NEP solely on the word "retreat" which Lenin himself had used, but which by no means exhausted his characterisation of the New Economic Policy. Referring to NEP directly and, in a more general sense, to political actions of a similar nature he asked: "Does it not imply a 'surrender of positions', an 'admission of defeat', or something of that sort?" And answered: "Of course, our enemies—from the semi-feudal type of reactionaries to the Mensheviks... say that it does. They would not be enemies if they did not shout something of the sort on every pretext, and even without any pretext."² And, indeed, if we take into account all what Lenin had said about NEP and what actually took place in that period, we would unfailingly come to regard NEP as a profound strategic manoeuvre and a component part of the general advancement towards socialism.

¹ E. H. Carr, in a reference to the aims of NEP, asserts, for instance, that allegedly "none of these aims was distinctively socialist" (*The Interregnum*, New York, 1954, p. 3). The American historian Frederick L. Schumann claimed that the fundamental elements of NEP were "contrary to all sound Marxist principles" (*Russia Since 1917*, New York, 1957, p. 131).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 109.

Incidentally, Lenin also wrote frankly on this issue. In notes made in 1922 he posed the question "... how (N.B.) to *approach* socialism?" And replied: "Not otherwise than through NEP."¹ It is not accidental, therefore, that the current CPSU Programme states that Lenin "evolved the New Economic Policy (NEP), designed to bring about the victory of socialism".²

NEP was a retreat compared with War Communism, but only in the sense that only "inconvenient", "unfavourable" positions, which could not ensure economic development were abandoned, and that less remote positions, although less "progressive" but more advantageous from the point of view of communist relations, and more convenient for competing with capitalist countries were occupied. "... We, the Russian proletariat," Lenin wrote, "are *in advance* of any Britain or any Germany as regards political system, as regards the strength of the workers' political power, but are *behind* the most backward West-European country as regards organising a good state capitalism, as regards our level of culture and degree of material and productive preparedness for the 'introduction' of socialism."³

Of course, insofar as the private capitalist sector occupied an important though not the dominating position in the Soviet Union during NEP, the latter did constitute a certain danger. But could there be a path to revolution where no danger would be encountered? Moreover, the private capitalist sector was subordinate to the socialist sector even when the private businessman, as an economic figure, "outdid" the socialist sector (in the field of retail trade, for example) for a certain period of time. For the main levers, both economic and political, were in the hands of the proletarian state which regulated the private

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 588.

² *The Road to Communism*, Moscow, 1962, p. 457.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 339.

sector in conformity with the socialist aims and public requirements.

On the other hand, the small-commodity sector predominant in the countryside gave rise not only to the shoots of private capitalism; under the influence of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its economic and political institutions and also in pursuance of their own interests the peasants began to accept socialist forms of agriculture and socialist relations, in other words, they were becoming accustomed to socialism. NEP was a concession to the peasants, but one which proved to be strategically advantageous to socialism. Private capitalist relations could develop with a fair amount of success in one sphere or another, but only so long as the state lacked the possibility to concentrate on these spheres whose development was essential for the harmonious progress of the national economy as a whole. The private capitalist and small-commodity sectors were able at times to strengthen their positions, but since they had to turn over a part of their profits to the state in the form of taxes, the state could employ this additional revenue to expand the socialist sector. In a way, NEP was a "peaceful competition" between socialism and capitalism in the economic field; and the distinguishing feature of this competition consisted not only in that socialism was in a much stronger position, but also in that the non-socialist sectors, unwillingly though, objectively performed the role of "builders of socialism". Lenin wrote in those years: "Isn't it paradoxical that private capital should be helping socialism?"

"Not at all, it is, indeed, an irrefutable economic fact."¹

Reflecting the dialectics of the correlation of the different economic structures during the period of NEP, Lenin proposed: "We shall intensify production, get turnover going, provide a breathing space, strengthen the petty

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 354.

bourgeoisie, but even more so *large-scale production* and the *proletariat*. The one is bound up with the other."¹

Thus, socialism, insofar as it depended on the balance of forces inside the country, was bound to win this competition. And even the "new" bourgeoisie, which through practical experience came to realise that Soviet power had come to stay, were in general fully aware of their limited opportunities. That was why, in the final analysis, the threat of capitalist development was not serious.

It was in this sense and in no other that Lenin characterised NEP by the formula "*capitalism+socialism*".² NEP was not the equivalent of socialism and Lenin never thought of calling it so inasmuch as it constituted the economic substance of the transitional period. But its inner trend was definitely socialist. Lenin stressed this: "Economically and politically NEP makes it fully possible for us to lay the foundations of socialist economy."³ Therefore, even though the dark sides of NEP did strike the eye, they were nevertheless doomed to disappear, while the future belonged to the emerging shoots of socialism. Therefore, seeing that Lenin's evaluation of NEP mirrors its various aspects, it is important to sense the true direction of development in the dialectics of Lenin's train of thought based on the real state of affairs.

J. V. Stalin characterised this trend in the development of the New Economic Policy and the gradual change in its nature in the CC Report to the 14th Party Congress: "NEP is a special policy of the proletarian state aimed at permitting capitalism while the commanding positions are held by the proletarian state, aimed at a struggle between the capitalist and socialist elements, aimed at increasing the role of the socialist elements to the detriment of the capitalist elements, aimed at the victory of the socialist

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 536.

² Ibid., Vol. 36, p. 539.

³ Ibid., Vol. 33, p. 252.

elements over the capitalist elements, aimed at the abolition of classes and the building of the foundations of a socialist economy."¹

Clearly, the very idea of NEP and its practical implementation essentially led to the conclusion that socialism could win in one country, and Soviet Russia became that country. "... NEP Russia will become socialist Russia."² This conclusion of Lenin's vastly enriched creative Marxism, for previously Marxists believed that socialist revolution would win more or less simultaneously in a group of countries or would not win at all. The line of building socialism in a single country strengthened the foundation of the international revolutionary movement and, thanks to the Soviet Union's economic and cultural development, enhanced the revolutionising influence of socialist ideas on the world as a whole. In this way NEP proved to be the only expedient policy which a country of the victorious revolution could pursue in the existing international situation.

NEP was also exceptionally interesting as a structure which demonstrated the interrelations between economics and politics in their entire complexity. It was not a general retreat, it was a retreat in the sphere of economic relations, but not in politics. A "discrepancy between our economic 'forces' and our political strength"³ was what made it necessary to regroup these forces, without budging an inch from political positions, but retreating from the economic ones.

The thesis of historical materialism that in the final count politics arises from society's economic structure is irrefutable. But Lenin's entire activity, both as a Marxist theoretician and leader of the socialist revolution, evidences that he attached tremendous individual importance

¹ J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 7, Moscow, 1954, p. 374.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 443.

³ Ibid., Vol. 32, p. 339.

to politics as one of the motive forces of social development. At times his widely known formula "Politics is the concentrated expression of economics" is interpreted with emphasis on the last word and consequently the logical connection is obscured with the following thought he expressed: "Politics must take precedence over economics."¹

At the same time, the above formula contains another important word "concentrated" which shows that politics absorbs and reflects the most essential, determining economic links. Taking this into account, the situation which took shape in Russia with the introduction of NEP can be characterised as follows: the socialist revolution triumphed in Russia thanks to certain preconditions, including economic ones; by virtue of its very nature the political power of the proletariat established in the country orientated itself on the communist transformation of all spheres of activity, including economic activity; but production carried on by small proprietors did not fit into the framework of these measures; therefore it was necessary to transform the economic policy in order to adapt it to the prevailing economic ties and at the same time to preserve the political system intact.

In reply to conjectures that NEP would help the "new" bourgeoisie to advance towards political power, Lenin unequivocally declared: "... Anybody who in a vulgarised way applied to our 'NEPmen' the proposition of historical materialism that economic power must be followed by political power, is in danger of falling into serious error, and even becoming the victim of a series of ridiculous misunderstandings."²

Employing military analogies, we could have said that as a result of War Communism both the vanguard shock units (political system) and the logistic establishments (eco-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 83.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 407.

nomic relations) accumulated in the first echelon, thus impeding further headway; NEP, having halted the advance of the vanguard, brought forward the logistic units and establishments.

On the other hand, Lenin showed that NEP was not only a retreat and that as a political task it was much more complicated than a military manoeuvre by comparing the development of the Russian revolution with a mountain-climber scaling a mountain. He wrote in his brilliant article *Notes of a Publicist*: "Let us picture to ourselves a man ascending a very high, steep and hitherto unexplored mountain. Let us assume that he has overcome unprecedented difficulties and dangers and has succeeded in reaching a much higher point than any of his predecessors, but still has not reached the summit. He finds himself in a position where it is not only difficult and dangerous to proceed in the direction and along the path he has chosen, but positively impossible. He is forced to turn back, descend, seek another path, longer, perhaps, but one that will enable him to reach the summit. . . . One has to tie a rope round oneself, spend hours with an alpenstock to cut footholds or a projection to which the rope could be tied firmly; one has to move at a snail's pace, and move downwards, descend, away from the goal; and one does not know where this extremely dangerous and painful descent will end, or whether there is a fairly safe detour by which one can ascend more boldly, more quickly and more directly to the summit."¹ This comparison most forcefully evidences Lenin's revolutionary boldness and his political sagacity.

NEP showed that contrary to the views of dogmatists who employed *a priori* principles and were divorced from reality, the road to socialism did not represent a straight line. In the revolutionary government there were people who fetishised these principles and by doing so, as it grad-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 204.

ually came to light, impeded the attainment of fundamental aims. Lenin realised this danger in good time and in guiding the country towards socialism he saw to it that the interests and social psychology of the majority of Russia's population were taken into consideration.

The intricate and multifarious interrelation between economics and politics under conditions of NEP leads to another important conclusion that one and the same method cannot be applied at all stages of revolutionary action. During NEP Lenin repeatedly emphasised that while purely revolutionary, uncompromising actions prevail in the periods of direct and complete break up of the old, when it becomes necessary to consolidate what has been achieved, the old approach should give way to "a totally different method, a reformist type of method: not to *break up* the old social-economic system—trade, petty production, petty proprietorship, capitalism, but to *revive* trade, petty proprietorship, capitalism, while cautiously and gradually getting the upper hand over them, or making it possible to subject them to state regulation *only to the extent* that they revive".¹

Advocating a change of tactics and employment of a "reformist" method in solving crucial issues of economic upbuilding, Lenin spoke with concern about the political and psychological aberration which stood in the way of the new tactics. "The greatest, perhaps the only danger to the genuine revolutionary is that of exaggerated revolutionism, ignoring the limits and conditions in which revolutionary methods are appropriate and can be successfully employed. True revolutionaries have mostly come a cropper when they began to write 'revolution' with a capital R, to elevate 'revolution' to something almost divine, to lose their heads, to lose the ability to reflect, weigh and ascertain in the coolest and most dispassionate manner at what moment, under what circumstances and in which sphere of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 110.

action you must act in a revolutionary manner, and at what moment, under what circumstances and in which sphere you must turn to reformist action. True revolutionaries will perish (not that they will be defeated from outside, but that their work will suffer internal collapse) only if they abandon their sober outlook and take it into their heads that the 'great, victorious, world' revolution can and must solve all problems in a revolutionary manner under all circumstances and in all spheres of action."¹ These words have an exceptionally topical ring today, when in a number of countries extreme Left-wing elements are discrediting the revolution by their ill-considered actions, sometimes even dooming it to defeat. Such functionaries strive to "load the people with benefits" against their will, and are indignant when the latter will have none of the spurious "happiness".

In other words, in order to achieve a set goal in revolutionary action it is necessary to employ flexible methods and surmount the arrogant pseudo-revolutionary shortsightedness. This calls for an understanding of the importance of compromise for the revolution, a compromise which, without sacrificing its fundamental gains, would make it possible to move forward with less expenditure of strength and smaller losses.

NEP implied a compromise and not only with an ally—the peasantry—but also with a class enemy, and therefore it was a serious compromise which made it incumbent on the proletarian state to return some positions to private capital.

Lenin said that NEP had to be accepted "seriously and for a long time",² and resolutely opposed attempts to return to methods of War Communism. He noted that in the existing situation the slogan had to be "the slower the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 110-11.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 429.

pace, the more solid the economic foundation".¹ At the same time he repeatedly emphasised that the retreat was temporary. "We are now retreating," he said, "going back, as it were; but we are doing so in order, after first retreating, to take a running start and make bigger leap forward."² Once again it is possible to draw the conclusion that in a sense NEP was a retreat, but at the same time it pointed toward socialism.

NEP: ITS DIALECTICS AND CRITIQUE

Lenin's opponents, bourgeois ideologists, on the one hand, and oppositionists in the Bolshevik Party itself, on the other, failed to apprehend this dialectics of NEP. Carried away by NEP, the Right wing of the opposition advocated unlimited retreat, thus deferring the building of socialism for an indefinite period, while the "Leftists" regarded the development of NEP as a betrayal of revolutionary principles. Yet both the ones and the others had one thing in common—reluctance (or inability) to see that NEP was actually a step towards socialism.

Among Russian bourgeois intellectuals in exile there appeared several groups who had a fairly large circle of fellow-thinkers in Russia herself and who spoke up in favour of acknowledging the results of the revolution and co-operation with Soviet power, believing that NEP would open the door to capitalism in the country. One of the most prominent ideologists of the "new" Russian bourgeoisie, Professor N. V. Ustryalov, also anticipated the emergence of a socialist bourgeoisie in the person of NEPmen and kulaks and then corresponding changes in the field of "major policy". His line of thinking was in many respects

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fifth Russian Edition, Vol. 43, p. 370.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 437.

borrowed from P. N. Milyukov, ex-leader of the Cadet Party who, with unconcealed satisfaction, characterised NEP as a retreat from the stringent principles of the Communist Party. These ideas were mirrored in the *Smena Vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*) journal—hence the name of the trend—in the sense that while accepting the revolution it was necessary to "extend" NEP in order to bring about a degeneration of the revolution and the restoration of domination of private property and enterprise. Western economists and sociologists interpreted NEP as a sign of the general degeneration of the revolutions, saying that after all "the wind returned again according to his circuits". "The Russian Revolution," wrote Lyford P. Edwards in a book published in 1927 and then republished in New York in 1965, "ended when the general body of Russian citizens accepted the new economic policy as the normal foundation of everyday life..."¹

For their part the Social-Democrats took advantage to discredit politically the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. K. Kautsky, for example, alleged that NEP signified the defeat of Bolshevism and a return to capitalism. The Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer maintained, as did the Russian apologists of bourgeois development, that the Bolsheviks were allegedly moving back towards capitalism and, consequently, confirmed his thesis about the bourgeois nature of the Russian revolution. Petty-bourgeois democrats abroad and Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks adhered to similar views.

Members of the *Smena Vekh* group from among the bourgeois specialists who entered into the service of Soviet power used the press and public meetings to demand the removal of all restrictions in the private capitalist sector and said that it was necessary to rely on the kulaks in the countryside. Professor B. D. Bratskus, an agrarian, sug-

¹ Lyford P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution*, Chicago, 1927, p. 205.

gested that the Decree on Land should be revoked and that people would be free to buy or sell land, believing that this would be the best way of raising the productivity of agriculture and keeping the urban industry supplied with labour power. Another professor, N. P. Oganovsky, insisted on the abolition of the progressive tax.

Succumbing to the influence of the ideas advanced by the Smcna Vekh group some members of the Communist Party, mainly technical specialists who misconstrued the meaning of economic efficiency, proposed an "easier" path which could in fact have deprived the revolution of its gains. At the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923, People's Commissar for Foreign Trade L. B. Krasin insisted on the introduction of "NEP in foreign policy", proposing that the country should orient itself on financial aid from the capitalist countries. "I said before and assert now," he wrote to the Congress, "that without foreign credits and loans economic rehabilitation will be a long and tortuous process pregnant with the danger of Russia becoming a purely peasant country."¹

In most cases such views stemmed from what today could be called a technocratic conception of development and which gave absolute priority to considerations of technical expediency and not to political and social objectives. Naturally, the Party which had as its aim the socialist transformation of the country could not accept such a concept and resolutely opposed it.

Another specialist, member of the Communist Party M. Shanin, suggested that the Soviet economy should specialise in supplying agricultural products, mainly grain, to the capitalist world. His idea was further developed at the Fourteenth Party Congress (1925) by the People's Commissar for Finance G. Sokolnikov. The Central Committee opposed them by stating in its Report to the Congress that

¹ Twelfth RCP(B) Congress, *Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1968, p. 194 (in Russian).

in that event there could be no guarantee against the conversion of Russia into an appendage of the capitalist system.¹

Finally, a group of Party members led by Bukharin later qualified as Right-wing deviationists harboured gloomy prospects of the country's social development. At the Fourteenth Party Congress he said that socialism in the USSR would have to be built at a "snail's pace". In April 1925, at a mass Party meeting in the Bolshoi Theatre, Bukharin came forward with the dangerous slogan "Enrich yourselves" which was interpreted as an appeal to the kulaks to fatten at the expense of the proletarian sections of the rural population. It was only natural, therefore, that Ustryalov enthusiastically welcomed the slogan. The Party, however, rejected it right away.

Now let us take a look at the criticism levelled at NEP from another direction—from positions of petty-bourgeois revolutionism.

Individual orators at the Tenth Party Congress which proclaimed NEP and the authors of notes which were handed over to Lenin who was the speaker, inferred: "You have the door wide open for the development of the bourgeoisie and capitalist relations." That was why voices protesting against concessions were raised among workers' and peasants' audiences.

Trotsky characterised NEP as a deviation from the revolutionary trajectory, while Zinoviev who headed the "Left" opposition at the Fourteenth Party Congress regarded NEP as "Leninism's greatest retreat". Still another "Leftist", Sosnovsky, defined NEP as "capitulation" before the petty bourgeoisie. The anarcho-syndicalist *Rabochaya Pravda* (Workers' Truth) group which among others included some "Leftists" who had been expelled from the Party, in its indignation over the "sweet life" of the newly rich, assessed NEP as a return to capitalism.

¹ J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 363-64.

The champions of petty-bourgeois revolutionism who had united in the Leftist "New Opposition" headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev tried to put up a fight at the Fourteenth Congress against the Party over the peasant question. In their opinion, the middle peasant, the central figure in the countryside, was nothing more than a petty bourgeois. Trotsky, who shortly aligned himself with the "New Opposition", characterised the entire peasantry as "the proletariat's counter-revolutionary ally". Still earlier the members of the "Workers' Opposition" accused Lenin of taking only the interests of the peasantry into consideration and of allegedly sacrificing the interests of the working class.¹

"Leftist" doctrinaires condemned NEP also because by concentrating the Bolsheviks' efforts on the building of socialism in the country it signified that they had withdrawn their support for the world revolution. Thus, a representative of German "Left" Communists who had quit the Comintern because of its "opportunism" declared that the transition to NEP resulted in a "contradiction between the interests of the revolutionary world proletariat and the interim interests of Soviet Russia".² It is interesting to note that the ideologists of the modern "ultra-Leftists" slight the Soviet Union's present policy of building the material and technical basis of communism as "betrayal" of the interests of the world revolution.

And when the Party drew up and advanced a programme for the building of socialism in one country, the "Leftists" christened it "socialism in one street". In an effort to convince the Party of the futility of this programme, Trotsky maintained at the Fifteenth Party Conference (October-November 1926) that if capitalism was preserved

¹ See *Eleventh RCP(B) Congress. Verbatim Report*, pp. 101-09, 118-19 (in Russian).

² *The Third World Congress of the Communist International*, Petrograd, 1922, p. 106 (in Russian).

in advanced European countries "we shall be throttled or routed...".⁴

The Party swept pessimism and panic aside. The Fourteenth Party Conference in 1925 stated in its resolution that the task of the working class of the USSR was that of "bravely and resolutely building socialism already now".² The successes of the first five-year plans, the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War, the enormous growth of the Soviet Union's military potential and international prestige after the war confirmed that the Party had charted a correct course.

THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NEP

The enormous historical significance of the theory and practice of NEP has not diminished with time, but, on the contrary, is increasing steadily. As though foreseeing that this would be the case, Lenin wrote: "This task which we are working on now, for the time being on our own, seems to be purely a Russian one, but in reality it is a task which all Socialists will face."³

NEP provided a solution to the question of relations between the ruling proletariat and the petty-bourgeois masses, and from this point of view it is especially interesting since the founders of Marxism discussed this question only in most general terms. Therefore the leaders of the Russian revolution actually pioneered its solution. Lenin demonstrated the historical significance of the Party's new experiment within a few months after the introduction of NEP and tried to bring the importance of this conclusion home to foreign Communists.⁴ Lenin's course received high

¹ *Fifteenth Conference of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, Bulletin No. 10, Moscow, 1926, p. 71 (in Russian).

² *CPSU in Resolutions...*, Vol. 3, p. 214.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 177.

⁴ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 453-61, 478-96.

praise from the outstanding leaders of the Comintern. Clara Zetkin wrote to Lenin on November 12, 1922: "The new policy is inevitable not only in the conditions existing in Russia; it is also essential for effecting the transition to communism. The proletariat of other countries upon winning power will, *mutatis mutandis*, also have to advance along the difficult path of the 'new policy', but of course, under more favourable conditions than in your country."¹ At the time, however, not all Communists appreciated the full depth of Lenin's thought, for the communist movement in the West was still concerned only with preparing the revolution and revolutionising the working class, a stage through which Soviet Russia had already passed. Certain features of NEP were detected later, in the transitional period in the development of People's Democracies in Europe and Asia. Evidently, NEP cannot but be acceptable in one form or another as a whole historical stage of post-revolutionary development to any country where a socialist revolution has been accomplished.

The practical experience of NEP is of particular interest for countries with a predominantly small-commodity economic structure. According to Lenin's conclusions, such countries suffer not only from capitalism in general, but also from the inadequate development of capitalism. Pointing out that "capitalism is a boon compared with mediaevalism, small production", Lenin said that the state building socialism should "utilise capitalism (particularly by directing it into the channels of state capitalism) as the intermediary link between small production and socialism, as a means, a path and a method of increasing the productive forces".² This task is of paramount importance for the developing countries which have won independence and taken the non-capitalist path.

¹ *The Communist International. A Brief Historical Survey*, Moscow, 1969, p. 176.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 350.

For them NEP is also instructive in that it paves the way for industrialisation and solving socio-economic tasks which, strictly speaking, should have been fulfilled by capitalism but which remain unsolved due to the ill-balanced character of pre-revolutionary development.

Finally, the Soviet experience of NEP helps these countries in searching for and determining the optimum forms of co-operation between the state and private, small-commodity (and even patriarchal) sectors and for ways of modernising and socialising the non-socialist sectors.

The more advanced countries, naturally, may view the experience of NEP from a somewhat different angle. Having already solved the problem of industrialisation, they are no longer faced with the task of socialist accumulation. Upon coming to power, the socialist forces in these countries will have at their disposal a modern technoeconomic structure and a well-developed commercial and technical apparatus to ensure the bond between town and country, all of which had been created by the monopolies. In these countries where large-scale capitalist production is predominant in agriculture the peasant question presents itself in a totally different light. But in view of the fact that small enterprise, particularly in the non-productive sphere, is widely developed in these countries and they have broad "middle sections" and that, finally, a certain portion of their working class is strongly permeated with petty-bourgeois ideology, it is a matter of particular importance for them to utilise the experience of NEP in drawing all these masses into the general process of socialist development and patiently remoulding their social psychology.

It is not accidental that the Communist parties in these countries are inclined to conclude that the achievement of their immediate strategic aim, namely, the advent to power of the anti-monopoly coalition of democratic

forces, chiefly socialist in its aspirations, will inaugurate a democratic and not a socialist stage of the revolution. In this period it will be necessary to patiently and unobtrusively lead the masses up to socialism, avoiding hasty changes which can only jeopardise the socialist cause. And even though the transitional period in the capitalist countries which are ripe and even overripe for socialism will perhaps be shorter, it, nevertheless, cannot be avoided.

THE WORLD REVOLUTION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

We complete our account of how the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin charted, specified and paved the way to socialism in Soviet Russia with a chapter on a foreign policy theme. We shall examine this theme separately, although chronologically the events it covers coincide with those mentioned in the preceding chapters, for in our day and age all questions bearing on the international situation, questions of war and peace are vital for all people in all countries.

The dynamics of Lenin's thought and actions in the sphere of foreign policy stand out in particularly bold relief because here it was necessary to begin virtually from scratch, to build a conception and swiftly to translate it into practice in response to the circumstances. The founders of Marxism in effect did not, nor could have raised the question of the substance of the relations between socialist and capitalist states inasmuch as the very possibility of such relations seemed incredible. → X

Whereas Marx and Engels, perceiving the future as a living social reality, foresaw that it would inevitably be characterised by a diversity of contradictions, their Social-Democratic epigones believed that the future society would develop without conflicts. It was believed that a revolu-

tion, should it end in victory, would assume a world-wide, or at least an all-European nature, and that relations of friendship and fraternity would automatically be established in the resultant world association of socialist nations as they would between peoples. In the beginning of the twentieth century Karl Kautsky wrote: "The socialist international society will not have to be a conglomerate of sovereign nations in which each will be able to act at will.... When the proletariat wins political power state borders will disappear together with various other inherited survivals."¹ Although reality subsequently overturned this forecast, the international Social-Democracy accepted it as an axiom right up to the First World War.

And if there could be in Social-Democracy a trend whose theoretical and political principles contradicted such an essentially utopian vision of the future world, it was the Leninist trend and the Leninist Party. For Lenin, while formulating the strategy and tactics of the Russian revolution, revealing its immense individual significance and showing the possibility of its independent development even without a socialist revolution in the West, rejected the metaphysical approach to the question, and that at a time when Social-Democrats had an extremely high opinion of Kautsky as a theoretician. The trend of Lenin's thought showed that his intellect was keen and unburdened by obsolete traditions, that he was not hypnotised by names, and that his was a creative approach to Marxism. Kautsky was Lenin's intellectual antipode. Scholastic adherence to theory which developed into dogmatism was what had dragged him into the quagmire of opportunism, whereas only the ability to see the world without bias could have helped him preserve his revolutionary outlook.

Some of the key principles of the foreign policy of the socialist state existed long before it had been estab-

¹ *Ergänzungshefte zur Neuen Zeit*, 18 Januar 1908, S. 17.

lished. In the first place, they were the struggle for socialism in the world arena, support for the revolutionary movements, and recognition and defence of the right of nations to self-determination. Lenin repeatedly referred to them, particularly in the years of the First World War. But they did not constitute all the principles, or the entire foreign policy conception of victorious socialism. Therefore it would be interesting to trace the appearance and development of those of its elements which could not be present in the works of the founders of Marxism, although today they are taken for granted. It was Lenin and the Party who formulated these elements in the course of a bitter clash of views at an exceptionally dangerous period for the young Soviet state, when its very existence was at stake. Let us, therefore, go back to that critical period in order to see how Lenin's ideas took shape, gathered strength and demonstrated their viability. One of the best examples showing Lenin's creative approach to Marxism was his elaboration of the concept of peaceful coexistence as a principle of the foreign policy of the revolutionary, socialist state.

FROM REVOLUTIONARY WAR TO PEACE

In 1915, replying to the question as to what the Party of the Russian proletariat would do if the revolution had placed it in power, Lenin wrote in his "Several Theses": "... We would propose peace to *all* the belligerents on the condition that freedom is given to colonies and *all* people that are dependent, oppressed and deprived of rights. Under the present governments, neither Germany, nor Britain and France would accept this condition. (This prediction proved to be absolutely correct. —Y. A.) In that case, we would have to prepare for and wage a revolutionary war, ... work systematically to bring up an uprising among all peoples now oppressed by the Great Russians,

all colonies and dependent countries in Asia (India, China, Persia, etc.), and also, and first and foremost, we would raise up the socialist proletariat of Europe for an insurrection against their governments and despite the social-chauvinists."¹

In other words, Lenin, first, regarded the end of the war—and this was to be the principal slogan of the victorious Russian revolution—as highly improbable and believed that it would be possible to establish peace only *after* the victory of all-European revolution and not before. Second, he believed that it would be only natural for the future revolutionary government to begin a war for the social emancipation not only of the peoples of the former Russian Empire, but also of the working people of other states. Already here we can discern the embryo of the idea of peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world inasmuch as the very line of Lenin's reasoning presupposed the need for the country of the victorious revolution to enter into contact with bourgeois governments in order to conclude peace, although no specific mention was made of the coexistence concept. The main thing, however, was that emphasis was laid on support for the revolutions in other countries with every means, including war.

It is noteworthy that right up to the victory of the October Revolution and the assumption of power by the proletariat, Lenin, in his quest for a historical parallel for the foreign policy of the liberated Russia of the future, often turned to the wars revolutionary France had to wage in the period between 1790 and 1794. Lenin's works show how carefully he studied the history of the French Revolution, and referred more and more often to this historical example as the Russian workers drew nearer to their cherished goal. Expressing admiration for these wars, he noted that it was they that "destroyed and shattered feudalism and absolutism" and that as a result their negative

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 403-04.

aspect, "an element of plunder and the conquest of foreign territory by the French",¹ receded into the background.

Preparing a socialist revolution Lenin visualised the imminent civil war in Russia as a component of the revolutionary war which the Russian proletariat would definitely have to wage in support of the revolution in the West. Such was the meaning behind the well-known Bolshevik slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war.

In the first years of the world war, Lenin saw no chances of it coming to a quick end: the masses had not yet begun to long for peace, and militaristic passions had not cooled; all that came later.

Upon returning to Russia after the February Revolution, Lenin often repeated the slogan of revolutionary war, and in one of his articles² carried by *Pravda* in April even quoted the corresponding passage from the above-mentioned "Several Theses" which he had written while living in exile in Switzerland. Once in Petrograd, he very quickly sensed how greatly the people had been exhausted by the war and all the sufferings it had brought. His awareness of this fact became increasingly noticeable in his speeches as the October Revolution drew closer. And although formally he did not remove the slogan of revolutionary war, he gradually tried to make it sound less and less obligatory and laid increasing emphasis on the Bolsheviks' intention to put an end to the war in the first place. "Peace is the chief thing."³ In his opinion this phrase, which he wrote later, defined the fundamental, direct meaning of the revolution for the man-in-the-street and "any muzhik".

"At the beginning of the war," Lenin admitted later, "we Bolsheviks adhered to a single slogan—that of civil

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 300.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 393-94.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 36.

H X war, and a ruthless one at that. We branded as traitor everyone who did not support the idea of civil war. But when we came back to Russia in March 1917 we changed our position entirely.¹ The timely shift to this new position proved to be a decisive factor of the Bolshevik victory in October 1917.

At the same time, another, in fact, an opposite point of view which could be called "universalist", existed in the Party. In accordance with this viewpoint, the future Soviet power should direct its entire activity solely at accelerating the world revolution, and that, it was believed, could be ensured through direct military confrontation with international imperialism and, consequently, through the continuation of the war, although with quite a different alignment of forces.

These two points of view, dynamic and inert, clashed at the Sixth Party Congress, although at that time the collision could not have been acute inasmuch as it was over a hypothetical situation. Bukharin, who was the reporter on the question of war at the congress and who adhered to the "universalist" position, declared: "The victorious workers' and peasants' revolution (in Russia. — Y. A.) will have to declare a revolutionary war, i.e., to provide armed assistance to proletarians who are still fighting for victory. . . . The only democratic way out of the blind alley where the West European and then American countries have landed, is an international proletarian revolution whatever the sacrifices it may cost us."² Soon afterwards, in the beginning of 1918, this idea of accomplishing world revolution at any price placed the very existence of the Soviet state in jeopardy.

X In actual fact, this seemingly "Leftist" idea signified that its supporters proposed avoiding the complex and

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 325.

² *Sixth Congress of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks). Minutes*, Moscow, 1958, pp. 104-05 (in Russian).

long-term problems of deep-going changes in their own country and adopting a more "direct" course of exporting revolution (which, of course, would by no means be a line of the least resistance).

Lenin who was in hiding in Razliv at that time, did not attend the congress, yet his influence, the influence of a keen and sober politician, was clearly felt in many of the speeches. Delegate M. M. Kharitonov, for example, criticised the draft resolution submitted by Bukharin, because it made the Russian revolution dependent on the West European revolution. "One gets the impression," he said, "that we have no prospects for further development. It is as though our revolution has come to a stop and there only remains the possibility of an international proletarian revolution."¹

Only one person supported the original wording of Bukharin's draft which the congress rejected. He was Preobrazhensky, Trotsky's future associate. And it was also Preobrazhensky who introduced an amendment (to another resolution) which reflected in the most concentrated form the "universalist" sentiments repudiating the national limits of the Russian revolution. His amendment rejected the possibility of a victorious socialist revolution in Russia and asserted that the country could move towards socialism only provided there was a proletarian revolution in the West.

The amendment was turned down by the congress which upheld Lenin's strategical line of accomplishing the socialist revolution in Russia.

Later Kautsky would claim that Bukharin's point of view coincided with the Party's general stand. That was why he maintained: "Our Bolshevik comrades staked their all on an all-European revolution."² It is true that the difference between the "universalist" and Lenin's position

¹ *Sixth Congress. . .*, p. 106.

² K. Kautsky, *Die Diktatur des Proletariats*, S. 29.

at a specific moment could merely seem an insignificant verbal inflection. In effect, however, it subsequently developed into very serious contradictions over the strategic line because Lenin's opponents came out against the building of socialism in one country from the position: "either a world revolution, or no revolution at all".

Convinced by the entire course of events following the February Revolution that the immediate conclusion of peace was Russia's No. 1 problem, Lenin on the eve of the October Revolution worked out a plan offering a totally new solution to the problem of revolutionary war. Once in power and having issued an appeal for universal peace the Soviet Government was "itself immediately to take steps" to carry out its own proposals for peace even though "such peace terms will not meet with the approval of the capitalists but they will meet with such tremendous sympathy on the part of all the peoples and will cause such great world-wide outburst of enthusiasm and of general indignation against the continuation of the predatory war that it is extremely probable that we shall at once obtain a truce and a consent to open peace negotiations".¹ Lenin assumed that this plan would not be carried out completely and that an armistice would only be concluded on the Eastern, Russo-German front, while military operations would continue on the other fronts. That was exactly what happened.

Only "if not a single belligerent state accepts even a truce," he wrote, "then as far as we are concerned the war becomes truly forced upon us, it becomes a truly just war of defence",² and not an offensive one, as he thought in 1915. But such a situation was highly improbable. Add to this that Lenin understood the Soviet Government's commitment to fulfil the peace terms to include the withdrawal of Russian troops from foreign territories they had

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 62-63.

² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

occupied, and we shall see that he intended to give up the foreign policy tactic of the French in the period from 1790 to 1794, the tactic of offensive revolutionary wars, of which he formerly had a high opinion.

In other words, on the eve of the October Revolution Lenin no longer considered it necessary for the future socialist state to wage a revolutionary war. On the contrary, he obviously wanted Russia to withdraw from the world war and even, if the Entente countries did not follow her example, to sign a separate peace, or a truce for the time being, with the coalition of Central Powers led by Germany. This would ensure a longer period of peaceful coexistence between the socialist state and at least one group of capitalist countries. At the same time, in September 1917, noting that the victorious proletariat of Russia had the possibility of "achieving an armistice and peace without the shedding of further seas of blood" Lenin added: "If the proletariat gains power it will have every chance of retaining it and of leading Russia until there is a victorious revolution in the West."¹

It is clear from the context that Lenin proceeded from the hypothesis of peaceful coexistence which would, he believed, last for a certain, even if a short period of time, but long enough to carry out a series of foreign political acts and manoeuvres, from the signing of peace to the exploitation of imperialist contradictions. In these notes Lenin began to substantiate, from class positions, the need to pursue a policy of peaceful coexistence as the best possible condition for stimulating the world revolution by force of example of socio-economic development and not by a revolutionary war. "... The maturing and the inevitability of the world-wide socialist revolution is beyond doubt, and such a revolution can be seriously aided only by the progress of the Russian revolution, ..." ² he wrote.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

He displayed his principled revolutionary stand by connecting the development of the Russian revolution with the world revolution, although the link between them would not be the rifle but rather economics and politics. In that pre-revolutionary period it was still difficult to visualise that revolutionary Russia would not only remain the world's sole socialist country for a long time but would also become the foundation and the main detachment of the world revolutionary movement setting an example to its other detachments. Six months after the October Revolution Lenin, emphasising the enormous significance of the Russian revolution and also its orientation on a world-wide revolution, said: "the will of history has temporarily placed that proletariat (Russia's.—Ed.) in a foremost position and made it for the time being the vanguard of the world revolution" (emphasis added.—Y. A.).¹ But as the situation changed and it became apparent that Russia would hold this place for a long time, Lenin admitted: "When we began working for our cause we counted exclusively on the world revolution."²

In 1921, when it already became clear that revolutionary Russia had survived in spite of the fact that the revolution in the West had been defeated, Lenin characterised the Bolshevik Party's pre-revolutionary tactics in the following words:

"We thought," he recalled, "either the international revolution comes to our assistance, and in that case our victory will be fully assured, or we shall do our modest revolutionary work in the conviction that even in the event of defeat we shall have served the cause of the revolution and that our experience will benefit other revolutions. It was clear to us that without the support of the international world revolution the victory of the proletarian revolution was impossible. Before the revolution, and even

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 423.

² Ibid. Vol. 31, p. 397.

after it, we thought: either revolution breaks out in the other countries, in the capitalistically more developed countries, immediately, or at least very quickly, or we must perish."¹

The future, however, suggested a different path. Although the development of the world revolution proved to be much more complicated than it had been imagined, Soviet Russia held its ground even in these unfavourable external circumstances. And yet Lenin concluded his recollections concerning the pre-revolutionary forecasts with a seemingly unexpected sentence: "And generally speaking, this was correct."²

It would be reasonable to connect this sentence with a discussion which went on in the Party leadership on the eve of the October Revolution between the proponents and the opponents of an immediate armed uprising. Lenin and his associates defeated the vacillating elements in the Party largely because they connected their confidence in the success of the uprising with hope for assistance from the proletariat of the Western countries, which, it seemed, would be promptly furnished. This hope helped the defenders of Soviet power to hold their ground against the onslaught of superior enemy forces after the revolution had already taken place. Assistance did come but not in the expected form. The trust in an imminent world revolution did not materialise, although it did contribute to the victory of the October Revolution. In this sense this trust was obviously as "correct" as was "correct" the Russian revolution's inherent, even if not direct, interconnection with the world revolution. Similarly, if we reason logically, it would have been "incorrect" to defer the uprising with references to the really existing let-up in the revolutionary movement in the West, a line which Zinoviev and Kamenev tried to impose on the Party.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 479-80.

² Ibid., p. 480.

But at all times, including the pre-October period, Lenin never failed to take account of the concrete domestic situation. His sober approach, characteristic of a real politician, proved to be the steel pivot which later, in the most difficult periods in the life of revolutionary Russia, determined his singleness of purpose and utter confidence in ultimate victory, while some other Party functionaries fell into despair and failed to see a way out of the situation. In his strategic plan of the Russian revolution the revolution in other European countries was assigned the role of a potential and, therefore, insufficiently defined, factor which, consequently, could not decide its outcome. Later, after the October Revolution, Lenin said: "... Only a fool can ask when revolution will break out in the West. Revolution can never be forecast; it cannot be foretold; it comes of itself."¹ Since this revolution could not be "forecast", it could not be taken into account in everyday politics. Yet this conditional factor stimulated the very real motive force of the Russian revolution—the enthusiasm of the masses. This enthusiasm sprang from the deep belief in the world revolution and was nourished by the smallest indication of unrest abroad.

Lenin never stood apart from the revolutionary masses. His political realism lent greater perspicacity to his revolutionary singleness of purpose and prevented him from harbouring illusions. But it never prompted him to view the Russian revolution out of the international context since, as a Marxist, he justly regarded the world revolution as a historical inevitability, though not necessarily an immediate one. The so-called "national-Bolshevism" advocated by the Smena Vekh group during the NEP period, and which in the final count could have led to the inauguration of a great-power policy wholly divorced from genuine revolutionism, was deeply alien to Lenin.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 83.

Thus, the world revolution and peace with capitalist countries were the two objectives of the foreign policy of the socialist state which was about to appear in the world. Biased and myopic observers regarded these objectives as incompatible, as was evidenced by opinions voiced both from the "left" and the right, and which are still being expressed today. While the majority of bourgeois Sovietologists assert, as they did before, that the young Soviet state which orientated itself wholly on the world revolution had no foreign policy as such at the outset, the "ultra Left-wingers" believed that it simply could not have existed. The American Sovietologist Alfred G. Meyer, for instance, asserted that "Soviet Russia had no intention of regulating its relations with the outside world..."¹ On the other hand, Trotsky, who was close to the "Left Communists" and who after the October Revolution received the portfolio of foreign minister said approximately the following: "What sort of diplomatic work shall we have to do? I shall advance some revolutionary slogans and put the shutters up."² Schematism with dangerous intentions.

In actual fact, both objectives, both basic principles of Soviet foreign policy—stimulation of the world revolutionary process and achievement of peaceful coexistence—combined dialectically. Lenin expressed this unity in his articles and in the measures launched by the Soviet Government beginning with its first act—the promulgation of the Decree on Peace.

Indeed, in his first statement immediately after the assumption of power by the people, Lenin said that it was necessary to stop the war right away. And on the following day, November 8, he opened his report in support of the famous decree with the words: "The question of peace is a burning question, the painful question of the day."³ These

¹ Alfred G. Meyer, *Leninism*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1957, p. 218.

² L. Trotsky, *La mia vita*, Milano, 1961, p. 290.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 249.

were not mere words, for the Soviet Government, having proclaimed its intention to fight for a just and democratic peace without annexations and indemnities and thus challenging the political aims of both belligerent coalitions, simultaneously proclaimed in the Decree on Peace that it did not "regard the above-mentioned peace terms as an ultimatum" and that, in other words, it was "prepared to consider any other peace terms".¹ In this way the revolutionary government proposed negotiations with the capitalist countries, or, as we often say today, settlement of controversial issues by peaceful means. In behalf of the Council of People's Commissars Lenin set the primary task of concluding an armistice for three months, or, if that proved impossible, for at least a month or six weeks and reject unequal treaties.² He made it absolutely clear that the new government would accept and develop "all clauses containing provisions for goodneighbourly relations and all economic agreements".³ Summing up, it may be said that an effective and constructive foreign policy was formulated which contained, even if in embryonic form, the principle of peaceful coexistence.

But the proletarian government would not have been consistently revolutionary if in the Decree on Peace and the accompanying declarations it had not reaffirmed its intention to do its best to help stimulate the revolution abroad. For it appealed not only to bourgeois governments but also to the politically conscious workers of the major belligerents to help the Russian proletariat to conclude peace successfully, and at the same time to help emancipate the labouring and exploiting people of Soviet Russia from all forms of slavery and exploitation.⁴ In other words, this was an appeal for revolution, as can be gathered from the fact that Lenin concluded his short

¹ Ibid., p. 250.

² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 255-56.

³ Ibid., p. 255.

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 252.

speech in which he proclaimed the assumption of power with the inspiring exclamation, "Long live the world socialist revolution!"¹ All this goes to show that in his thoughts and speeches and in the activity of the Bolshevik Party both objectives harmoniously merged into a single whole. This unity sprang from the revolutionary, genuinely socialist essence of the new authority, thanks to which not only the appeal to the proletariat in other countries to launch an uprising, but also the orientation on peaceful coexistence, on peace instead of war, had a fresh, unusual and revolutionising impact.

RETREAT, PAINFUL BUT UNAVOIDABLE

The Decree on Peace caused an upsurge of confidence in the Bolshevik Government among the population. But its practical significance for the country's foreign policy was very limited at the time because the governments of the Entente countries did their best to prevent it from reaching the knowledge of their peoples and turned down the proposals for a general armistice. What could the Soviet Government do in circumstances when the troops of the Central Powers were about to launch a fresh offensive on Russian positions? It could either continue the war or sign a separate peace which would inevitably lead to large territorial and other losses.

The first alternative seemed to coincide with the Party's former conviction that a revolutionary war was essential. Inasmuch as the country was already in a state of civil war it was a great temptation to challenge not only the internal but also the external enemy, turn the first battle waged by the army of the socialist state into a second Valmy and begin a series of wars to liberate Europe? That, of course, was a maximum plan, but was it not possible to carry out the idea of a defensive war at least?

¹ Ibid., p. 240.

But there were no conditions even for a defensive war. The main thing was that there was no army: the old army was breaking up and the men were drifting to their homes, while the ensuing demobilisation merely formalised the situation which had arisen spontaneously. When Lenin asked the conference of the fronts and armies in December 1917 whether the Russian troops were capable of countering the impending German offensive, all delegates, with one exception, replied in the negative. This was in glaring contrast with the revolutionary enthusiasm of the proletarian masses, but this contrast was due to the fact that in terms of its social composition the army was the very image of the peasantry who did not want to fight.

On the other hand, the anticipated revolution in other countries did not take place. It seemed to the majority of Party members that a world revolution would break out tomorrow or the day after. But however great was the mobilising effect of this revolutionary confidence, Lenin realised the danger of the unfounded calculations it could engender. Therefore, immediately after the October Revolution he warned all those who were too optimistic that although a revolution in the West "is inevitable it cannot, of course, be made to order".¹ Later he would speak about a revolution which was "maturing in the West at a painfully slow pace" and that it was coming "more slowly than we expected".² Three years after that he would admit that an error had been made in assessing the prospects for a revolution in other countries.³

This error lay rather in the consciousness of the masses, for an analysis of the facts made shortly after the assumption of power compelled Lenin to work for a separate peace.

Unlike the Entente powers which were getting the upper

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 291.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 293.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, pp. 410-11.

hand in the First World War, the militarists of Kaizer Germany and with them the ruling circles of Austria-Hungary and Turkey received the decree with a feeling of relief assessing it as Russia's announcement of her unwillingness to fight and considering that her withdrawal from the war would make it unnecessary for them to fight on two fronts. (These narrow-minded politicians could not imagine that the decree would become a ferment thanks to which the smouldering popular discontent in their own countries would in less than a year's time erupt into a revolution.) That was why the young Soviet Republic shortly after the October uprising, on December 4 (November 21 old style), 1917, succeeded in concluding an armistice with the Central Powers. Regarding Russia as a conquered country, bureaucratic institutions and business associations in Germany and Austria-Hungary began to compile unending lists of claims on her, wording them in bureaucratic formulas which sounded like a civil action against an insolvent debtor. And the hellicose generals who possessed undisputed authority at the time did not even consider it necessary to cover up their desires with legal garments and used the language of robbers, demanding the annexation of vast territories totalling approximately a million square kilometres from Soviet Russia.

In doing so the leaders of the Central Powers perverted the meaning of the Bolshevik slogans of "peace without annexations and indemnities" and the "right of nations to self-determination". They declared that they would not give up territories seized during the war, alleging that their populations did not want to return to Russia. Puppet governments who "confirmed" their "independence" were hastily formed in the Ukraine and the Baltic states. Moreover, using the same pretext, the German side demanded that Soviet Russia surrender those Baltic, Ukrainian and Byelorussian regions that were still within her borders.

The belligerent imperialist powers reacted to the revolutionary foreign policy principles advanced by the Bolsheviks in exactly the same way. The US Government promptly published President Wilson's "The Fourteen Points" proclaiming "freedom of navigation", "freedom of trade", "open treaties" and "free adjustment of all colonial claims". They proclaimed the freedom or autonomy for the enslaved European nations in words only as a screen for their imperialist policy. The then Gray Cardinal of the White House, Colonel House, admitted that "in a sense the Russian situation formed the chief *raison d'être*" of President Wilson's message to Congress setting forth the fourteen points as a programme for the Western "democracies".¹

Apparently the loftiest slogan can be turned into its opposite. The Lenin Government made this point already when it concretised the concept "self-determination of nations" by referring to the conditions under which it had to be translated into life, namely, on the basis of a national referendum following the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

But this was more in the realm of good wishes, while the real way of bringing Russia out of the war in the beginning of 1918, even if an onerous one, was, in Lenin's opinion, the signing of a separate peace, entailing major territorial losses, with the coalition of the Central Powers, for the alternative would have been a German offensive which in the obtaining conditions would inevitably have resulted in the surrender of Petrograd and Moscow and, possibly, the end of Soviet power. Such was the grim, though precise, conclusion which attested to Lenin's political sober-mindedness, his ability to face the truth, and his rejection of self-deceit to which so many politicians are addicted like to a drug. Much later Lenin

¹ *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, New York, 1928, pp. 328, 330.

frankly said that at that time "from the military standpoint our forces were non-existent, we possessed nothing and were steadily sinking into the depth of economic chaos".¹

The tragedy lay in the fact that the enemy was not insensible to this and based his plans on Russia's military incapacity. In his memoirs General Erich Ludendorff wrote that he and his chief Paul von Hindenburg were sure that the resumption of military operations would have led to the fall of the Bolshevik government.² Lenin could not know how well the Germans were informed, but knowing the balance of forces he drew a conclusion which was so accurate that one would have thought he had a thorough knowledge of the situation. It was clear that his political intuition had not failed him.

A NEW APPROACH TO A REVOLUTIONARY FOREIGN POLICY

Taking account of the situation Lenin found it necessary to evolve a new concept of the place and function of Soviet Russia on the international scene. While prior to and immediately after the October Revolution the general opinion in the Party was that the uprising in Petrograd would be a torch hurled into the powder-magazine of the capitalist system, two or three months after the assumption of power it became clear that either the powder was damp or the explosion could be localised and the edifice would remain intact so that the torch would burn to no avail. That was the reason for the paramount importance which was attached to preserving the world's first socialist state.

This was the subject of Lenin's "Theses on the Question of the Immediate Conclusion of a Separate and An-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 439.

² See Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918*, Berlin, 1919, S. 446.

11 * } nexationist Peace" which he read on January 8(21), 1918 at a meeting of the Petrograd Party activists attended by delegates from a number of other towns and regions. Directly, without beating about the bush, as the title implied, Lenin raised the question of the inevitability of concluding a "vile" peace, as he would later dub the Brest-Litovsk peace with Germany. Such formulation of the question meant that the dialectical "world revolution—peaceful coexistence" knot contained a potential contradiction which had now come to the fore and which had to and could be resolved. Lenin indicated how this could be done but the Party did not accept his proposal right away and did so only after Lenin had conducted a great deal of explanatory work.

This was a new approach primarily because now Lenin laid emphasis "on the correct presentation of the question of our attitude to the world socialist movement".¹ Obviously, he was dissatisfied with the fact that Russian revolutionaries based this attitude not only on solidarity, but also on their selfless willingness to sacrifice everything to further it. He criticised the literal interpretation of relying on the victory of socialism in Europe as something that was bound to happen at any moment, and with the deliberate sobriety of a politician warned the revolutionaries not to harbour any illusions on this score.

In his theses Lenin formulated the following fundamental principle of the foreign policy activity of the revolutionary party, diametrically opposite to the idea of a "torch in a powder keg": "The position of the socialist revolution in Russia must form the basis of any definition of the international tasks of our Soviet power..."²

At that time, as is also the case today, some "Leftists" abroad, intoxicated by the vision of a world revolution

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 64.

² Ibid., Vol. 26, p. 443.

and oblivious of the more rigorous reality, were prone to regard this point of view as being something in the nature of "national egoism" and therefore bitterly polemicised against it. But already at the time history confirmed that Lenin was absolutely correct when he maintained that in order to create a real and expanding base for the world revolutionary movement every possible effort had to be made to preserve Soviet power in Russia.

In these theses Lenin attached special importance to the world-wide revolutionising significance of the socialist transformations in Russia, and for the first time placed such enormous emphasis on the independent influence of her experience on the destiny of the world. "A socialist Soviet republic in Russia," he noted, "will stand as a living example to the people of all countries, and the propaganda and revolutionising effect of this example will be immense. There—the bourgeois system and a fully exposed predatory war between two groups of marauders. Here—peace and a Socialist Soviet Republic."¹ This example, however, could produce the greatest effect so long as the Soviet system existed and developed, and that meant that it had to be preserved at all cost and by no means sacrificed for the sake of a very problematic world revolution.

On the other hand, Lenin arrived at the conclusion that absolutisation of revolutionary war was impermissible, particularly because it was not ensured by a favourable correlation of class forces and material factors. In principle, revolutionary war remained on the agenda. "Unquestionably," he said, "even at this juncture we must prepare for a revolutionary war."² There is, however, a sufficiently great distance between preparations for war and its waging; therefore it could be imagined, that Lenin came up with this reservation in order to make it

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 448.

² Ibid.

easier and less painful for the Party, which had become accustomed to steering a course towards war, to alter it. In the above document Lenin showed considerable restraint towards the adherents of the old course; but five months later he exposed its political essence to the core: soap bubbles, brandishing of paper swords, and bombastic and empty verbiage.

Another interesting fact was that Lenin also began to modify his approach to historical parallels. Formerly an admirer of revolutionary France's wars, he now referred to them only to underline the difference in situation and explain why Russia could not follow France's path. He reminded his audience of events which had a totally different purport even if they were connected with the history of France, namely, the predatory Treaty of Tilsit Napoleon imposed on Prussia and under whose terms she lost half her territory and population. Now he spoke of the French wars in a new light, and examining them he took the side of the vanquished and not the victors. It was from this angle that he looked at the Treaty of Tilsit of 1807, regarding it as an experience of Prussia's national defeat and humiliation and her ensuing revival. "... The best men of Prussia, when Napoleon's military jackboots trampled upon them a hundred times more heavily than we can be trampled upon now, did not despair. ... They did not give up, did not succumb to the feeling: 'We shall perish anyhow.' They signed peace treaties infinitely more drastic, brutal, humiliating and oppressive than the Brest Treaty, and then knew how to bide their time; they staunchly bore the conqueror's yoke, fought again, fell under the conqueror's yoke again, and signed the vilest of vile peace treaties, and again rose, and in the end liberated themselves (not without exploiting the dissensions among the stronger competing conquerors)."¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 74.

This excerpt from one of Lenin's later articles attracts attention in the first place because of the unexpected example which he summoned the Party to follow, for the "best men of Prussia" were politicians of the conservative, feudal-bourgeois wing. What interested him were not their political views, of course, but their skilful tactics, flexibility and manoeuvrability, qualities which showed that they were not merely politicians but statesmen who defended the national interests of their country in a roundabout manner, the only possible one in the circumstances, through retreat which alone could pave the way for future progress.

But such a sharp turn in politics—from the euphoria of victories to a humiliating peace—could not be made easily and painlessly and could not be accepted immediately and without resistance by the revolutionary masses for whom the slogan of revolutionary war was customary and natural. There was also another factor which could not be thrown off the scales, namely, the sluggishness of political thought against which, as it turned out, many Bolsheviks, too, were not ensured. This factor had a particularly detrimental impact at the turning-points of history, when a formerly correct policy became fatal and it became crucial to change the tactics and methods of struggle. The sluggishness of thought became particularly contagious in the beginning of January 1918 because it was based on the revolutionariness of the masses. Typical in this respect was the following guideline formulated in a resolution of the Moscow Regional Party Bureau: "Prompt formation of a volunteer revolutionary army and a merciless war against the bourgeoisies of the whole world for the ideas of international socialism."¹ It was only with great difficulty that the Party was able to reappraise the foreign policy course

¹ *Seventh Emergency Congress of the RCP(B). Verbatim Report*, Moscow, 1962, p. 299 (in Russian).

of the Soviet state and realise the need for a resolute change of tactics. The opponents of this reappraisal very effectively based their arguments on Lenin's former works. "I stand by Lenin's old position," that was how Lenin himself ironically generalised the objections to his proposals, and added: "The whole trouble is that the Muscovites want to stick to the old *tactical* position and stubbornly refuse to see the *change* that has taken place, the *new objective* situation that has arisen."¹

This conclusion and the determination with which Lenin revised his own positions demonstrated his keen political thought and skilled actions which A. V. Lunacharsky subsequently opposed to Trotsky's literalism with regard to revolutionary Marxism.² Lenin's stand on the question of the Brest Peace demonstrated his political farsightedness by not following preset patterns and creatively approaching politics: his "movement against the stream" yielded the desired result. At the same time the consequences of the Brest-Litovsk Peace showed that creative Marxism alone could be justifiably regarded as genuine Marxism, for only a realistic approach to the situation could ensure the correctness of the fundamental principles of scientific socialism.

The signing of the Brest Peace, as an example of political tactic, has something in common with NEP. Both attested to Lenin's political audacity which implied not only a determination to swim against the stream, but also the ability, when circumstances changed, to give up the old tactic, to alter the earlier decision, to look at the situation from a new angle and to retreat if necessary.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 452.

² See A. V. Lunacharsky, *The Great Revolution*, Vol. I, Petrograd, 1919, pp. 80-81 (in Russian).

THE DANGER OF REVOLUTIONARY PHRASE-MAKING

It was the "Left Communists" with their undeviating adherence to the doctrine of a revolutionary war, regardless of the changed circumstances, who became the main opponents of Lenin's new approach to the foreign policy of the Soviet state. Judging by the present as well as the past events, the very name "Left Communists" proved to be more significant than even its authors had imagined. It meant that engrossment in Leftism for the sake of Leftism and the absolutisation of revolutionary principles had introduced an element of disunity in the communist movement. Without expecting it, the then "Left Communists" became the forerunners of a whole trend which emerged in the international revolutionary and democratic movement and which has acquired a certain degree of influence in recent years. This fact has to be taken into account inasmuch as its adepts in all seriousness regard themselves Leftists and from these positions criticise the Soviet state's foreign policy as did the "Left Communists" in 1918.

Then, on the eve of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, the foreign policy stand of the "Leftists" dominated the Bolshevik leadership for a brief period of time. Lenin's "Theses on the Question of the Immediate Conclusion of a Separate and Annexationist Peace" were turned down; only about a quarter of the participants in the meeting of the Party activists supported his proposal to sign peace with the Germans on their terms, while about a half of those present voted for a revolutionary war. Not only D. B. Ryazanov, N. I. Bukharin and V. V. Osinsky, whose bent for criticism was well known in the Party, took the side of the "Leftists", but for a period the "Leftist" doctrine in the sphere of foreign policy had the support of such dedicated Bolsheviks as V. V. Kuibyshev, F. E. Dzerzhinsky, M. V. Frunze, V. V. Kosior, Y. Yaroslavsky and Inessa Armand, who usually adhered to Lenin's platform.

For a short while the country's biggest Party organisations, including the Petrograd and Moscow ones, likewise upheld the "Leftists" on this issue.

This alignment of forces was surprising only at first glance. The advanced proletariat which comprised the Party's nucleus, found it incredibly difficult to accept the humiliating retreat, whereas the old doctrine of revolutionary war undoubtedly corresponded to its militant spirit that became firmly implanted in its consciousness as a result of the victory of the October uprising. That was why Lenin acknowledged that the dominant mood in the Party stemmed "from the very best revolutionary motives and the best Party traditions".¹

Furthermore, he pointed out on more than one occasion that young men and women in the Party with their emotional recklessness and uncompromising revolutionism were particularly drawn to the "Leftists". Nevertheless, politics could not be built on emotions alone: it was necessary to take into account that the balance of forces was not developing in favour of the revolution. Emotionality is good for the revolution because it promotes its upsurge; at the same time it is dangerous when in difficult periods it inhibits a clear understanding of the hazards of the situation and obscures clear thinking. At such times it can easily degenerate into heroic madness and even lead to panic.

Addressing the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party on January 24, 1918, which met to decide whether or not to accept Germany's demand to conclude peace, leader of the "Left Communists" Bukharin declared: "It is in the interests of German Social-Democrats that we do not conclude peace because the movement (revolutionary. —Y. A.) is developing in Germany and Vienna. . . . By concluding peace we shall

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 451.

frustrate this struggle. By preserving our socialist republic we forfeit the chances for an international movement."¹

The "Left Communist" leadership in the Petrograd Party Committee claimed that peace with Germany would mean "unavoidable destruction of our Party as the vanguard of this (international. —Y. A.) revolution".²

The "Left Communists" accused Lenin and his supporters of betraying revolutionaries in the Ukraine, Finland, the Baltic countries and Poland, because they agreed that these countries should remain under German rule, and even in Germany herself, inasmuch as her government would be able to use the troops returning from the frontlines against the emerging revolution there.

At that time all "Left Communists" advanced an even more general thesis, and although it proved untenable in the course of the development of the Soviet state, it is, nevertheless, stubbornly upheld by the modern "ultra-Leftists". Its substance is that by coming to an agreement with the class enemy a socialist country allegedly undermines its prestige in the eyes of the revolutionary masses. But the Brest Peace was not the only arrangement of this kind, although possibly the most humiliating one. After the civil war, thanks to a series of agreements between Soviet Russia and the bourgeois world, which were not to the liking of many "Left Communists", her revolutionary prestige in the final analysis became even greater.

In the course of the struggle over the conclusion of the Brest Peace the views of the opposing sides became even more divergent, and opposite conceptions of the international role of the country of the victorious revolution evolved. The "Left Communists" continued to hold that Soviet Russia's "insular" character and her opposition to

¹ *Seventh Extraordinary RCP(B) Congress, Supplements*, p. 243 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 318.

the rest of the world was strictly a transient phenomenon and that the Russian revolution would very soon have its impact on the insurgent movements in different capitalist countries. That was why they saw nothing tragic in the further offensive of the German army if simultaneously the entire energy of the Bolshevik Party and other revolutionary forces would be focused on waging a partisan war in the enemy's rear. In other words, if socialist Russia perished and numerous seats of revolution appeared in her stead this would only be in the interests of world socialism.

This unwillingness to take reality into consideration, this political shortsightedness were intrinsic not only in the "Left Communists", but also in petty-bourgeois parties, such as the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, who supported the "Left Communists" in their opposition to the Leninist course from the right. The leaders of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries proposed an immediate "revolutionary war" against Germany "and a general armed uprising", so as to avoid "surrender to capitalism". Similarly Martov, the Menshevik representative in the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, maintained that if Soviet power signed the peace treaty it would forfeit its revolutionary substance in the eyes of the entire world proletariat as well as in the eyes of the Russian people. Martov's proposal was either to "resist in the hope of success" or "to fight in order to die with honour as the Paris Commune died".¹

The discourses of the "Leftists" are permeated with the idea that revolution is an aim in itself, an idea which is incompatible with the very essence of Lenin's train of thought. "In the interests of the world revolution, we consider it expedient to accept the possibility of losing Soviet power, which is now becoming purely formal."²

¹ See T. A. Sivokhina, *Debacle of Petty-bourgeois Opposition*, Moscow, 1973, pp. 127, 129 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 69.

That was how, according to Lenin, the Moscow "Left Communists" formulated their conclusion which he characterised as "strange and monstrous".¹ Somewhat earlier they peremptorily demanded a war "on a world scale". The idea of a world revolution through a world war was evidently born in 1918 and not in the 1960s.

Strictly speaking, it was a modified conception "the worse the better", which is frequently played up for provocative purposes by adventurist extremists who are prepared "for the sake of principles" to pursue an unprincipled policy that unfortunately beguiles some of the more credulous revolutionaries. In the seventies and eighties of the past century, Nechayev and his supporters deliberately tried to provoke the tsarist government into undertaking repression believing that the worsening situation would set off a revolutionary explosion. As regards the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Maria Spiridonova, this view manifested her sincere belief that this would promote the interests of the revolution. And when the Brest Peace was signed and came into force, she said that it was necessary to violate it and exclaimed at her party's congress: "In response . . . the German imperialists will send punitive expeditions and this is our salvation. . . . When the whole of Russia will be covered by punitive expeditions this will create a stimulus which will force the people to resist."²

Later historian M. N. Pokrovsky, himself a former active "Left Communist", aptly said that this was "psychology of despair".³ A killing political characterisation, it disclosed the roots of and offered a socio-political explanation to this attitude. For it was engendered by a feeling of inescapability, of the inevitability of the external

¹ Ibid.

² Quoted from *Voprosy istorii*, 1968, No. 2, p. 153.

³ M. N. Pokrovsky, *The Imperialist War*, Moscow, 1931, p. 251 (in Russian).

threat, a feeling which in general is natural for revolutionaries whose headquarters are within the range of enemy fire. Hence, for example, are such self-sacrificing declarations: "... We shall shed our blood if we must die arms in hand. It will be sacred blood which will wash the eyes of the proletariat in other countries..."¹ This exclamation rang out in Petrograd in March 1918 from the rostrum of the Seventh Party Congress. But Lenin, overcoming this dangerous inclination for self-sacrifice, used it as a source of strength, to survive and not to perish "with honour". His adversaries believed his position was influenced by non-proletarian elements (Bukharin) and considered it a muzhik and soldier policy (Ryazanov). In the final count, however, this policy conformed to the proletariat's interests inasmuch as it prevented its split with the peasantry which could prove to be fatal. As we have already seen, NEP was also introduced out of similar considerations.

The interpretation of revolutionary war as Soviet Russia's permanent condition up to the victory of the world revolution presupposed a no less determined rejection by the "Leftists" of any possibility of peaceful contacts with capitalist states. On February 3, 1918, at a meeting of the CC RSDLP(B) with representatives of various trends in the Party, a number of questions were raised which today would be qualified as problems of peaceful coexistence. The extreme "Left"-wingers V. V. Osinsky and I. N. Stukov gave negative answers to such questions as "can there be peace in general between a socialist and an imperialist state?" or "are economic agreements between a socialist and an imperialist state possible?" N. I. Bukharin who delivered a report at the Seventh Congress of the Party in behalf of the "Left Communists" regarded peaceful coexistence merely as a good wish on the part of a socialist country which the imperialists would reject

¹ Seventh Extraordinary Congress of the RCP(B), p. 94.

in practice by virtue of their very nature. In other words, the "Left Communists" never even considered the possibility of imposing peaceful coexistence on imperialism, something which subsequently became a paramount function of Soviet foreign policy.

An important role in keeping "Leftist" sentiments alive in the Party was played by Trotsky who, in spite of the fact that he was less adamant in his statements than Bukharin, was essentially a much more consistent "universalist". His views were rooted in the pre-October period, when polemising against Lenin's teaching about the possibility of the revolution winning first in one country, he declared that a victorious revolution in Russia or England was inconceivable without a revolution in Germany, and vice versa. He more than once repeated this view immediately after the October Revolution. He exclaimed at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, when the assault on the Winter Palace was still going on: "... If Europe continues to be ruled by the imperialist bourgeoisie, revolutionary Russia will inevitably be lost.... There are only two alternatives: either the Russian revolution will create a revolutionary movement in Europe, or the European powers will destroy the revolution."

An effective piece of rhetoric, and that was why John Reed quoted it in his *Ten Days that Shook the World*. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals that it smacked of fatalism which was incompatible with Lenin's creative approach to the revolution as something which had to be built out of the available material and not out of illusions. This phrase made it clear that Trotsky regarded peaceful coexistence between Soviet Russia and the bourgeois world as utterly impossible. And Trotsky's statement "that only a European revolution can save us in the full sense of the word" fired the minds of the "Left"-wing champions of the idea of a heroic onslaught.

While realising that this stand was connected with the

old generally accepted views in the Party, Lenin nevertheless advised the Communists that it was necessary to revise them.

"Regarded from the world-historical point of view, there would doubtlessly be no hope of the ultimate victory of our revolution if it were to remain alone, if there were no revolutionary movements in other countries."¹ Obviously, Lenin was beginning to believe that socialism could be built in one country: inasmuch as the ultimate victory of socialism could come about only as a result of the overthrow of capitalism in other countries, it was clear that if it were to win in one country it was possible and necessary for that country to rely solely on her own forces, since no other forces existed as yet.

Lenin did not reject the conclusion about the inevitability of socialism winning throughout the world, just as the contemporary communist movement has not given it up. But he treated this conclusion as an absolutely abstract truth,² and warned that it should not form the basis of a foreign policy. At the same time, in examining the reverse side of this interconnection—assistance on the part of the country of the victorious revolution to revolutionaries in other countries—Lenin observed: "Actually, however, the interests of the world revolution demand that Soviet power, having overthrown the bourgeoisie in our country, should help that revolution, but that it should choose a form of help which is commensurate with its own strength."³ Thus, he resolutely rejected the absolutisation of revolutionary war which seemed essential at the earlier stages of the revolution.

Lenin, as we have shown, did not simply recognise the connection between the Russian and world revolutions; for him this connection was unquestionable and that accounted for the profoundest internationalism of his theory.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 95.

² *Ibid.*

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 72.

What divided Lenin and Trotsky was not the question whether such a connection did in fact exist, but a much deeper one, namely the manner in which it should be interpreted. While Trotsky who understood this connection mechanically and one-sidedly, and precluded other interconnections, Lenin demonstrated a dialectical understanding of socio-political development. Trotsky's approach, had it been effected, would have doomed the Russian revolution and undermined the international revolutionary movement, whereas Lenin's approach ensured the success of the revolution in Russia and, consequently, provided a basis for the development of the world revolutionary process.

COMPETENCE AND FORCE OF CONVICTION

For exactly a month Lenin with his supporters on the question of peace with the Germans remained in the minority in the leadership of his Party where he always enjoyed unquestioned authority: he owed his Party sobriquet Starik (Old Man) not only to his seniority in age. One can get an idea, if only an incomplete one, of the difficulties of those thirty days, and the acute polemic which Lenin had to conduct, from the brief minutes of the CC meetings. What is most interesting is that they show that the political setback and the dangerous situation in which the country found herself had not dispirited Lenin, but, on the contrary, lent him an almost superhuman energy. At the same time there was virtually no evidence of nervousness, let alone despair, in his words, although the enemy was relentlessly advancing on Petrograd and the agitation of his opponents, quite understandable in the circumstances, was clearly manifest in their speeches. Never for a moment did he consider laying down arms; on the contrary, he intensified his efforts to get the situation under control. Gradually he marshalled his arguments,

strengthened his polemic, steadily building up its influence. As his anxiety about the future of the state increased, he began to strike harder at his opponents, and the harsh notes of authority which appeared in his voice did not stem from a desire to dictate but from his conviction in the correctness of his attitude. He demanded that the gains of the revolution in Russia should be safeguarded and there should be no illusions about a world revolution. "War is no joke," Lenin said at the evening sitting of the CC RSDLP(B) on February 18, 1918. "We cannot wait any longer. . . . The Germans will now take everything. This thing has gone so far that continued sitting on the fence will inevitably ruin the revolution. . . . There is no sign of a revolution in Germany. . . . We cannot afford to wait, which would mean consigning the Russian revolution to the scrap-heap. . . . While playing with the war we have been surrendering the revolution to the Germans."

Then, addressing the "Left" majority, he said sharply: "History will say that you have surrendered the revolution." And added as an incontestable conclusion: "An offer of peace must be made to the Germans."¹

The determination behind his words was so impressive that some of the "Left Communists" gave in to his conclusions and will, and on that day he regained the majority in the CC, simultaneously inducing it to sign an agreement with the Germans.

But even though a corresponding cable was sent to the Germans, the struggle for peace had not come to an end. On the following day the "Left Communists", having united with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, managed at the joint meeting of the Central Committees of both parties which were represented in the Soviet Government to carry through their own resolution to fight against peace and resist the Germans to the last. Once again the suicidal line gained the upper hand.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 522, 523.

The decisive battle developed on February 23, at a meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee. On that day Y. M. Sverdlov, Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and Lenin's close associate, read out the onerous peace terms offered by Germany which claimed all territory west of Brest, plus the Ukraine, plus the Baltic regions and the re-establishment of the capitulatory trade agreement of 1904 which energetic Wilhelm II had forced upon his weak-willed cousin Nicholas II. And Lenin pressed his demands for peace to the limit. He declared that if the policy of revolutionary phrase-mongering would continue and the peace terms would be rejected he would quit the Government and the Central Committee, and added: "If you don't sign them, you will sign the Soviet power's death warrant within three weeks."¹

A harsh, but necessary tone. Presumably, only such an ultimatum—Lenin used the word himself—could have forced the vacillating to follow him. The issue was put to the vote and Lenin won the majority: seven for peace, four against and four abstentions. Even the most active "Leftists" did not risk a split in the Party, which would have been unavoidable if Lenin had resigned. It was not only a question of a specific decision, no matter how vital; Lenin's ultimatum completely overturned the "universalist" alternative: either a world revolution, or we shall perish. Something more than a political tactic was reviewed: it was a reappraisal of the dogma which many regarded as the basic premise, the key postulate of the communist movement. Here Lenin displayed both the courage of a politician and the audacity of a theoretician.

Subsequently George F. Kennan described Lenin in the following words: "A critical intellect equal to none in the history of the socialist movement."² This acknowledge-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 479.

² George F. Kennan, *A History of Soviet Foreign Policy*, p. 257.

ment was all the more valuable because it was made by a person who had no sympathy for communist ideas. But it was an accurate characterisation as the polemic over the question of peace with the Germans adequately proved.

Lenin's determination and firmness in a most amazing way combined with his skilful manoeuvring. At times in the period preceding the Brest-Litovsk Peace he would retreat, accepting one or another thesis put forward by his opponents, knowing in advance how to turn it against them and use it to save the revolution; he either "lured" them into a trap of acute issues, compelling them to bring their arguments to a logical conclusion and thus make the most absurd statements, because he knew full well that tomorrow or very soon life itself would prove their untenability.

➤ That was what happened on the opening day of the Seventh Party Congress, when the leaders of the "Left Communists" came out with an appeal in which they rejected all chances for peace and respite for the revolutionary-socialist Soviet Republic because of the social distinctions between it and the bourgeois countries.¹ (Today their position could be defined as Left-wing dogmatic negation of the possibility of peaceful coexistence.) This could logically lead to only one conclusion: to die arms in hand, which was what the most emotional "Left-wingers" appealed for. Opposing this stand Lenin wrote that such conceptions stemmed from the laws of honour of the nobility which were false and comical for a revolutionary. That was why the "Left Communists" reminded him of a romantic and arrogant officer from the nobility "who, dying in a beautiful pose, sword in hand, said: 'Peace is disgraceful, war is honourable'".² Naturally, such a stand was alien to the masses.

¹ *Seventh Congress of the RCP(B)*... p. 291.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 105.

This dangerous logic is still alive, the only difference being that those who reason along these lines prefer to see other people go into battle for them. At the height of the US intervention in Vietnam the well-known French writer Jean-Paul Sartre unexpectedly declared that the Vietnamese tragedy could be ended if the Soviet Union declared war on the United States. Recent events, however, have overturned such prescriptions: the US imperialists were compelled to withdraw from Vietnam under the pressure of the reasonable policy of the socialist world led by the Soviet Union which combined its all-round assistance to the fighting peoples of Southeast Asia with a quest for a political settlement that would prevent the further extension of the dangerous hotbed of war. The New Left would do well to recall Lenin's words: "If the enemy are proclaiming that their aim is to suppress the revolution, then he is a bad revolutionary who by choosing an admittedly impossible form of resistance helps to achieve a transition from the 'proclamation' to the *realisation* of the enemy's aims."¹ At the Seventh Party Congress he criticised those Party functionaries who had "confidence" in their ability to cope with international imperialism. Such blind trust in an easy victory was even more dangerous when nearby, as Lenin put it, "a tiger was lying".²

Lenin's amazing intuition based on a combination of a precise, strictly scientific calculation absolutely devoid of emotional self-deceit, and his approach to politics as an art, made itself fully felt in his polemic with the "Left-wingers". He warned against harbouring excessive hopes for a German revolution and therefore remained perfectly calm when rumours about a revolutionary explosion in Germany reached his ears, although the "Left-wingers" were all set to celebrate the victory. And he was right, for

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

the rumours were premature and the revolution broke out several months later. He also envisaged the inevitability of a fresh German offensive, while the "Left-wingers" believed that the revolutionary spirit of the German soldiers would get the best of the aggressive intentions of the German military command. At a meeting on January 21, Lenin summed up the speech made by the "Leftist" Osinsky in the following words: "The German soldier will not agree to an offensive. . . . An uprising in Germany is near at hand. . . . I trust these (fairytales)."¹

Incidentally this naïve "trust" was repeated many years later. It is impossible to forget, for example, how on the eve of the Great Patriotic War many Soviet people believed that ordinary Germans—workers and peasants in uniform—would not fight against the socialist state, and paid a heavy price for their political naïvety.

Lenin's ability to polemicise revealed itself with exceptional force in the period preceding the Brest Peace. G. V. Chicherin wrote in this connection: "Vladimir Ilyich countered endless theoretical discourses with naked facts no matter how merciless."²

The writings of modern scholastics abound with such "endless theoretical discourses" intended to conceal the absence of facts which, should they be cited, would expose the stupidity and senselessness of their speculative constructions that have nothing in common with reality. And yet, it was not enough merely to refer to facts: in order to convince his opponents whose profession, as they saw it, was revolutionary theory, which they lent a dangerously self-sufficing character, it was necessary to make these facts carry the desired force of conviction. Lenin did this. He laid bare the facts to build the framework of his arguments against obsolete theoretical views, and thus elevat-

¹ *Seventh Extraordinary Congress of the RCP(B)* . . . , p. 216.

² *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Moscow, 1969, Vol. 4, p. 406 (in Russian).

ed them to the level of a new theory. In the period immediately preceding the Brest Peace he did not directly mention peaceful coexistence; he was on his way to reaching this conclusion, but this approach was already a discovery.

True, many views Lenin expressed were determined by the specific historical situation. But this did not in the least detract from them because while reflecting the development of reality and Lenin's political thought, they formed a system of theoretical innovations which went beyond the limits of events that engendered them and thus acquired universal theoretical significance. In this way Lenin's day-to-day revolutionary activity enriched and developed Marxism.

Arthur Ransome, correspondent of the liberal *Manchester Guardian* in Russia who had free access to the Kremlin, recalled his meetings with Lenin in the following words: "He struck me as a happy man; every one of his wrinkles is a wrinkle of laughter and not of worry. . . ." Another memoirist, the American Louis Fischer who quoted Ransome in his book, followed up these words with an involuntary exclamation of admiration: "All of 1918 was full of the most difficult moments in Lenin's life. Yet he never despaired."¹ Lenin's optimism, remarkable against the background of calamities and economic dislocation, made itself felt with exceptional force throughout the period preceding the conclusion of the Brest Peace.

Lenin's victory in the Central Committee predetermined the signing of the Brest Peace which took place on March 3, 1918, and, in effect, the outcome of the Seventh Party Congress which assembled to approve this decision. The proletariat of Petrograd and other cities was influenced by the stern reality of the German offensive, on the one hand, and Lenin's convincing arguments, on the other: his articles at the time appeared almost daily in the

¹ Louis Fischer, *Lénine*, Paris, 1964, p. 190.

press. That accounts for the fact that the biggest Party organisations, which were about to turn "Left", began to see the expediency of accepting the "vile" peace much earlier than their leaders. A number of delegates from workers' organisations in the Urals, the Donets Basin, and Yaroslavl at the congress frankly admitted that they had set out for the capital with "Left" sentiments, but after hearing Lenin's arguments, they found them thoroughly convincing. Who knows what would have happened had Lenin's force of conviction weakened for just a single day.

And to sustain this force he had to work at a frenzied pace. Only twelve days separated the victorious voting in the Central Committee on February 23, and the approval of the peace terms by the congress. But in that short period Lenin wrote about a dozen articles, and delivered more than 20 speeches at various meetings, taking the floor 18 times at the congress alone. And since the peace terms had to be endorsed at various levels, Lenin had to find new words each time to convince the people involved. What strikes the eye is that Lenin did not confine his arguments to the need for unanimity and strict discipline; in the very difficult period of war he called upon everyone to display a sense of personal responsibility. Seeking the support of the revolutionary Russia's supreme organ of power, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, he exclaimed: "That is why I say, fully conscious of the responsibility I bear, and repeat that no single member of the Soviet Government has the right to evade this responsibility."¹

The day when the Seventh Congress opened he published an article in *Pravda* entitled "A Serious Lesson and a Serious Responsibility" (once again this word reflecting the spirit of inner Party life), in which he reproached "Left-wingers" for "sowing illusions which actually helped the German imperialists".² He counter-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 44.

² Ibid., p. 80.

poses this grave responsibility of the "Left-wingers" for damaging the revolutionary movement with the sense of Party responsibility of the most politically conscious and advanced workers who were rapidly "shaking off the fumes of revolutionary phrase-making".¹ In other words, Lenin did not regard the policy he had elaborated at the price of tremendous effort as his personal business, but as the business of Soviet power as a whole, and looked upon his responsibility as head of government as something inseparably connected with the opinion on these issues of a rank-and-file official. His appeal to the All-Russia Central Executive Committee discloses the giant distance separating a revolutionary, democratic society from an "ordinary" hierarchical state. The Soviet historian F. M. Burlatsky correctly observed that Lenin's political stand on the question of the Brest Peace was a vivid example of how his activity uniquely disclosed the "extremely thin line separating the power of an authoritative leader and the personality cult".²

This responsible approach to policy-making accounted for the friendly, loyal tone of Lenin's polemic over this issue, however acute it may have been, inasmuch as it was imperative to preserve the Party as an integral, mighty force.

Without deviating a step from his political line, Lenin at the same time strove to keep the "Left-wingers" in the Party; and when they tendered their resignations from leading posts he noted that resignation from the Central Committee did not mean resignation from the Party, and convinced the "Left-winger" A. A. Joffe to remain in the peace delegation.

There could be no sense of responsibility if the leaders were not absolutely frank with the masses. Lenin made

¹ Ibid., p. 82.

² F. M. Burlatsky, *Lenin, the State and Politics*, Moscow, 1970, p. 357 (in Russian).

this a condition of the effectiveness of Party decisions when he said at the Seventh Congress: "What is taking place at the present time does not resemble the old pre-revolutionary controversies, which remained within narrow Party circles; now all decisions are submitted for discussion to the masses, who demand that they be tested by experience, by deeds, who never allow themselves to be carried away by frivolous speeches and never allow themselves to be diverted from the path prescribed by the objective progress of events."¹ It was this truth, unvarnished with high-flown speeches, that prompted the Party and the proletariat of Russia to support Lenin in March 1918. He knew that he would have this support, and therefore, the anxiety which was present in his speeches at the time did not dispel his optimism or, to be precise, his confidence, which was based on knowledge, in the intellect of the working class.

Once approved by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Party Congress the Brest Peace was ratified by a Congress of Soviets. Soviet Russia withdrew from the world war and the mortal danger which hung over the socialist state was eliminated. During the breathing spell, although short-lived, it proved possible to strengthen the new social system. Moreover, in these few months the Soviet state managed to muster sufficient forces to withstand what seemed to be an overwhelming onslaught of both the Whiteguards and the interventionists. Later Lenin assessed the consequences of the Brest Peace as follows: "We gained time, a little time, but in return had to sacrifice a great deal of territory. . . . We sacrificed a great deal of territory, but won sufficient time to enable us to muster strength."² The British historian John W. Wheeler-Bennett who devoted a voluminous monograph to these events observed not without regret:

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 99.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 440.

"The Peace of Brest-Litovsk preserved Bolshevism."¹ The above-mentioned Louis Fischer concluded his account of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk in his book with the words: "The hero, however, of Brest-Litovsk was Lenin. Lenin's policy toward the Brest-Litovsk peace problem revealed his greatness. . . . As a statesman, Lenin observed, weighed, and reasoned, and arrived at decisions on the basis of reality. Power did not go to his head. . . . It cleared it. . . . He judged the concrete situation. The situation in 1918 demanded peace at a high price. He saw this from the beginning and was ready to pay. He thereby saved the state he had created."²

Just as Lenin had foreseen, the terms of the onerous treaty were short-lived. When the Soviet representative G. Y. Sokolnikov during the reading of the Soviet Government's declaration at the concluding meeting of the Brest Conference reached the phrase, "Not for a moment do we doubt that this triumph of imperialism and militarism over the international proletarian revolution will prove to be only temporary and transient,"³ the German General Max Hoffmann roared: "The same ravings again." Judging by the way the German militarists acted on the occupied territories it was clear that they intended to remain there for decades, but within eight months they were forced to go home, for as a result of the revolution which took place in Germany the Peace of Brest-Litovsk was annulled.

Lenin's singular qualities of a politician—his profound scientific prevision and amazing intuition, mighty temperament and rare self-control—stood out in particularly bold relief against the background of the tense epic of the Brest-Litovsk peace talks. Max Weber, one of the found-

¹ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: the Forgotten Peace*, London, 1963, p. XII.

² L. Fischer, *The Life of Lenin*, pp. 212-13.

³ *Soviet-German Relations from the Brest-Litovsk Talks to the Treaty of Rapallo*, Moscow, 1968, Vol. 1, p. 118 (in Russian).

ers of modern Western sociology, in his classical article "Politics as a Vocation" voiced his contempt for his contemporaries—superficial German politicians—in the meaningful sentence: "Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective."¹ And although Weber, who died in 1920, failed to grasp the historical role of the October Revolution, he, as a thinker of prominence, wrote about those qualities which were embodied in Lenin, but which he could not find in politicians who belonged to his own social class.

THE DANGER OF EXPORTING REVOLUTION

Four months after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace, when Lenin was reporting to the Fifth Congress of Soviets, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries from their benches loudly accused the Bolshevik Government of "betraying the revolution".

At the time it was still impossible to parry this monstrous accusation by disclosing all the facts attesting to the painstaking efforts that were being made to strengthen the independence of Soviet power and accumulate forces to uphold class comrades in other countries. But when a revolution broke up in Germany, Lenin openly appealed to the proletariat of Russia to do everything "to help the German workers".² The undernourished Russian workers denied themselves an extra slice of bread, but saw to it that food and weapons were sent to assist the revolutionaries in Germany. And when a revolution took place in Hungary, it was only the surprise offensive of the Whiteguards under General Denikin in the south of Russia and those under Admiral Kolchak in the east that prevented the Red Army units which were ready to come to the

¹ Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, New York, 1946, p. 128.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 102.

assistance of the Hungarian friends on Lenin's orders, from fulfilling this mission.

Having received the first dispatches about the revolution in Germany, Lenin was overcome with joy which like a magnetic field encompassed his associates, too. "His face beamed with joy,"¹ recalled Nadezhda Krupskaya. News of revolutions in those countries, naturally, inspired Lenin to make the most optimistic forecasts: "... The day was not far distant when all Europe would be united in a single Soviet republic that would remove the rule of the capitalists throughout the world."² And even if these forecasts did not come true, they were only natural and even beneficial because they gave an additional charge of energy to Russia's revolutionary workers and peasants.

The scope and implication of these words, however, did not mean that Lenin had given up his inherently sober approach to reality and political caution. As before he realised the tremendous independent significance of the Russian revolution. Day after day, reality furnished him with new proof of its tremendous inner force and he became firmly convinced that it could survive even without direct armed support from abroad.

As far back as the Brest period Lenin characterised the collapse of illusions for a speedy victory of the socialist forces in foreign countries, entertained by so many revolutionaries in both Russia and abroad, as a hard but useful lesson. Since he possessed the flexibility essential for a politician, he found it incomparably less difficult than others to take full account of the once again deteriorating international situation, a situation in which the socialist state would have to stand alone and evidently for a considerable period in confrontation with the whole capitalist world. Yet, by combining flexibility with an imperishable revolutionary trust, he preserved his historical optimism,

¹ N. K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, Moscow, 1959, p. 489.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 514.

while others were so shaken by the loss of their illusions that they proved a failure in politics.

As Lenin saw it, the Party's readiness to give the utmost assistance to a victorious revolutionary movement in any other country had nothing in common with the dangerous idea of the "export of revolution". On the contrary, anticipating a revolutionary explosion in Germany he said: "We shall take care that our interference will not harm their revolution."¹ This judicious cautiousness was only an element of the entire complex of Lenin's ideas about the impermissibility of "pushing" revolution in other countries, ideas which he developed as the plan of the socialist revolution gradually turned from theory into reality and the socialist state accumulated experience of state development. It was not that he was in principle opposed to armed assistance, for that was not the case. But judging by his line of reasoning, he clearly warned that the socialist state's interference could have a double negative effect: first, out of the basic considerations of the impermissibility of artificially spurring on "someone else's" revolution; and second, for fear lest such assistance might undermine the socialist system in the supporting country and compromise it in the eyes of the world public. After the November Revolution in Germany Lenin was quick to notice that not only petty-bourgeois sections, but even a portion of the workers were under the influence of what he called "this bugbear": "The Bolsheviks want to establish their system by force." And added: "We must arrange things so that the German traitor-socialists will not be able to say that the Bolsheviks are trying to impose their universal system, which, as it were, can be brought into Berlin on Red Army bayonets."²

There were Communists, however, who considered that this could be done. Speaking at a meeting of the All-Rus-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 123.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 174.

sia Central Executive Committee on November 10, 1917, B. A. Chudnovsky, a proponent of a revolutionary war, opposed the proposal to conclude an armistice with the Germans and said: "We shall have to continue the war, bringing the German proletariat freedom on the tips of our bayonets."¹ But not only Russia's "Left-wingers" entertained such thoughts. Shortly after the October Revolution some leaders of the young Communist parties in the Eastern countries based all their political plans on calculations that Red Army troops would bring them social emancipation. One of them expressed hopes if not for a bayonet then at least for a lance "in the hands of a Russian Moslem proletariat coming to the assistance of his brethren in Persia, India and Afghanistan".² It was not difficult to understand the logic of such conclusions: with the help of this sharp weapon, young Communists, inexperienced but filled with noble revolutionary impatience, hoped to cut the Gordian knot of social problems in their own countries. Lenin resolutely rejected this course which appeared to be one of the least resistance, foreseeing all its dangerous consequences. By doing so he contributed to a clear understanding of the differences between the foreign policies of bourgeois and proletarian revolutions; for the real authors of the doctrine of "liberation wars" were the Girondists, and then Napoleon who believed that Europe could be conquered by the sounds of the Marseillaise, while Robespierre, on the contrary, believed that not a single nation in the world would accept armed missionaries. Perhaps that was why Lenin altered his opinion of the French wars and began to view them from the standpoint of the European peoples standing in opposition to Napoleon.

¹ See D. V. Oznobishin, *From Brest to Yuriev. From the History of the Foreign Policy of Soviet Power, 1917-1920*, Moscow, 1966, pp. 32-33 (in Russian).

² *The Comintern and the East. The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in the National Liberation Movement*, Moscow, 1969, p. 90 (in Russian).

If the Peace of Brest-Litovsk made the Soviet state aware of the inevitability and expedience of peaceful coexistence, then the war with Poland which was unleashed by her government in April 1920 confirmed Lenin's thought about the impermissibility of "exporting revolution". At first, Polish forces even managed to occupy Kiev. But their success was short-lived. Shortly, in May the same year, the Red Army mounted a counter-offensive and its troops in a victorious march of 500-600 kilometres and in some parts even 800 kilometres came right up to Warsaw. This inspiring success led many Communists, and not only in Soviet Russia, to believe that the whole of Poland would be shortly occupied and that would result not only in the establishment of Soviet power there, but—why not, indeed!—also set off a chain reaction of insurrections by the West European proletariat and ensure the long-awaited victory of the world revolution.

Influenced by the situation, the majority of the leaders of the young Communist Party of Poland became convinced that the Red Army's offensive could best ensure the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Poland, which, judging by everything, would automatically unite with the RSFSR. It was improper even to speak of Poland's independence, for independence was the slogan inscribed on the banners of bourgeois and Right-wing socialist circles and parties. Accordingly, the national feelings among the Polish people were attributed to the influence of bourgeois propaganda; it was believed that with the Red Army's entry into Poland these feelings would disappear and the Warsaw proletariat would welcome their Russian class brothers by launching an armed insurrection to overthrow the bourgeois government. It was not surprising, therefore, that the leading Polish Communists sharply rejected the principle that the working class in each country should carry out a socialist revolution with the help of its own forces. And when Clara Zetkin, a

well-known German Communist, and the then People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Soviet Russia G. V. Chicherin employed this formula, they came under a heavy attack by Adolf Warski, one of the most authoritative leaders of the Polish Communist Party at the time. He was evidently undeterred by the status of the head of Soviet Russia's Foreign Affairs Commissariat or by the obvious fact that Chicherin would not have made this statement without Lenin's approval. The danger lay not in criticism alone, but in the deep belief that, as Warski wrote, "the desire to gain independence with outside help was widespread among the workers", a belief which turned illusions into a basic principle of policy and thus doomed it to failure.

It was impossible, however, to think of failure so long as the Red Army continued its offensive. And as though upholding Warski's position, the Red Army Command issued appeals to the Polish population in which it heavily emphasised its support for the Polish working people's struggle against the bourgeoisie and the landowners, and was extremely vague about the country's independence. In this respect Lenin was much more cautious and circumspect even at the height of the Soviet offensive. Replying to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Western Front which sought his opinion concerning the tactic of the RSFSR with regard to Poland, Lenin cabled the following on July 15, 1920: "We are entering Poland for the briefest period in order to arm the workers, and will withdraw from there immediately." Marcel Cachin who had a 90-minute conversation with Lenin on July 28, 1920, in the course of which the question of the Polish war was, naturally, discussed, made a very interesting observation in this connection. The following entry based on Lenin's words was found in Cachin's notebooks: "If working people in Poland will respond to the appeal of the Russian revolution and create their own Soviets; if the farm labourers working for the wealthy landowners will join

the Polish workers in the creation of a Communist government; if the Russians will see that Polish support will be forthcoming, only then will they give all-round assistance to Poland."¹ Here all these "ifs" are natural, just as natural, as was Lenin's scrupulousness with regard to the national feelings of the oppressed peoples.

Incidentally, four years earlier, prior to the revolution, Lenin in a reference to Poland which was suffering from Great-Russian oppression criticised the Polish "Left-wingers" for underestimating the national factor (now, in 1920, having become Communists, they returned to their erroneous position) and reminded them of Engels' words: "...*The victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing.*"² He also wrote: "National antipathies will not disappear so quickly: hatred—and perfectly legitimate hatred—of an oppressed nation for its oppressor *will last* for a while; it will evaporate only *after* the victory of socialism and *after* the final establishment of completely democratic relations between nations."³ The Soviet-Polish War proved that he was correct.

Meanwhile, however, a Polish Communist government—the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Poland with Julian Marchlewski as Chairman was set up in Bialystok which was occupied by the Red Army. Having declared the nationalisation of factories, landed estates and the introduction of other revolutionary changes, the Committee said absolutely nothing about Poland's independence, as though this problem did not exist. Marchlewski himself believed that since Right-wing Socialists were the heralds of national feelings, Polish Communists could not inscribe the slogan of national liberation on their banner. But this policy was doomed to failure. Unacquainted

¹ *Pravda*, July 28, 1969.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 352.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

as they were with the conditions in Poland, the Russian comrades who were Sovietising Poland inevitably committed numerous errors and failed to win the absolute confidence of the workers and peasants even though the leadership of the Polish Revolutionary Committee and the Red Army Command tried to repair their extremes. Even in Bialystok, the seat of the new Government, where nothing, as it seemed, could go wrong, Army bodies and leaders of revolutionary military committees often delegated various functions to chance people and could not establish necessary control over them. In a town with a predominantly Polish population the official languages at first were Russian and Yiddish and only people who knew them were given official posts. All this alienated the Polish workers.

Of course, there were occasional strikes by the workers against their exploiters, but on the whole class awareness was engulfed by a wave of nationalistic feelings which carried away not only broad sections of the students and the intelligentsia, not to mention the bourgeoisie, but also a considerable portion of the working class. Riding the crest of this wave, the troops of the Polish bourgeoisie inflicted a defeat on the Red Army and forced it to withdraw from Poland. Later Lenin said: "By the time our troops had got within reach of Warsaw they were too exhausted to press home the victory, whereas the Polish troops supported by a wave of patriotism in Warsaw, and with a feeling that they were now on their own soil, found encouragement and a fresh opportunity to advance."¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 302.

DIALECTICS OF THE NATIONAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL

The Soviet Government's political activity, ranging from the Peace of Brest-Litovsk to the war with Poland, strengthened Lenin's belief that the significance of the national question was immeasurably greater than that attached to it by Marxists. Unforeseen circumstances made it necessary to introduce changes, sometimes very important ones, into what seemed to be an inviolable theory.

Marx and Engels were inclined to regard national aspirations and contrasts as a diminishing factor. And when they exclaimed that "the working men have no country"¹ they could not have envisaged the explosions of mass nationalistic hysteria which erupted during the First World War, or the nazis' successful inoculation of the overwhelming majority of Germany's population with the poisonous serum of "fatherland". That was why they did not believe in any national future, for example, for the Czechs and for the Southern Slavs, considering that these peoples would inevitably be absorbed by the more powerful nations.² Nevertheless, their belief that the merger of nations was essential for human progress and their attitude to national interests as something that was doomed to extinction, formed the only possible basis for internationalism. And it was this basis which several decades later produced a galaxy of moral titans beginning with Romain Rolland and ending with Karl Liebknecht who withstood the onslaught of the muddy waves of chauvinism which swept over decimated Europe.

Lenin was the most consistent internationalist in the European Social-Democracy in the years of the First World War. He wrathfully spurned chauvinism, above

¹ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 502.

² Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Berlin, 1960, Bd. 8, S. 49-52.

all that of his own Great-Russian nation, for it was not too great a feat for a Russian Social-Democrat to criticise German or, for that matter, any other chauvinism. But he was also the only Social-Democratic leader at the time who appreciated the full power of chauvinism which threatened to increase and not to decline. (Subsequently many Communists often discovered to their surprise that the spirit of nationalism—a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois phenomenon, and, hence, a reactionary one—sometimes influenced the behaviour of the broad masses of the working people, including workers, who, judging by their class features, should have rejected nationalism and accepted nothing but internationalism.) On the other hand, while the Social-Democrats, including many Left-wingers, who opposed Lenin, in a show of arrogant civilisation maintained that the liberation of colonial peoples depended solely on social revolutions in the metropolitan countries, Lenin, who counterposed Europe's civilised bourgeoisie with the awakened and renovated East, was inclined to think otherwise. And the fact that today Western Europe has remained the citadel of capitalism, while many African and Asian countries have taken the socialist path of development, proves that Lenin was right.

Taking the importance of the national factor into account, Lenin criticised the thesis of Junius (Rosa Luxemburg) and the Left-wing Social-Democrats who supported her, that national wars were no longer possible in the era of imperialism.¹ Moreover, he predicted a whole range of future conflicts: first, the possibility of the transformation of imperialist wars into national and vice versa (such a change took place in connection with the Second World War); second, unavoidable national wars waged by countries liberating themselves against imperialism (for example, the 1956 war which Egypt

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 308.

waged against the Anglo-French-Israeli coalition); third, the possibility of national wars even in imperialist Europe (the anti-fascist Resistance movement, for example). In another article written at the time he spoke of the possibility of separating of the formerly oppressed nations (specifically Poland and Finland) from their metropolitan countries in the event of the victory of socialism in the latter. (Events proved that he had not erred when he mentioned these two countries.) Finally, he noted that the less cultured nations had even greater chances for separation in the long run.¹ (Here, too, he was right: the relations of the Soviet Union with various liberated countries have been characterised by ups and downs.)

It was because Lenin realistically appraised the correlation between the national and international factors that he advanced the principle of the right of nations to self-determination. This new formula in Marxism proved to be a brilliant political invention which, among other things, convinced the population of the oppressed and dependent countries accounting for the greater part of humanity, that the socialist camp came out in defence of their national interests, while imperialism only trampled upon them. Today, in the light of the obvious wisdom of this universally accepted principle it is hard to imagine that Lenin advanced and defended it in the face of strong counteraction not only from the Right, that is on the part of the imperialist camp, but also from the "Left". In 1917, at the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP(B), Y. L. Pyatakov, proceeding from the objective trends of development of the world economy, came out against the independence of nations, alleging that it was absolutely impossible and useless. "From a purely administrative and economic point of view," he said, "independence of nations is obsolete, impossible and behind the times. The demand for inde-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, pp. 120-21.

pendence is borrowed from another historical epoch; it is reactionary, for it is designed to reverse the course of history." Suffering under the widespread delusion that the history of each epoch should be painted either in black or white colours, as though the old historic garments, old interests, values and ideas do not pass from one epoch into another and are discarded all at once, Pyatakov put forward a proposal "to establish the principle that we are against separatist movements, against the slogan of a national state and are struggling against these movements. . . . Proceeding from an analysis of the new epoch of imperialism we say that at the present moment we cannot imagine any other struggle for socialism than the struggle under the slogan 'Down with frontiers', the struggle for the destruction of all frontiers".¹

Lenin countered him with an analysis of the objective reality, based on the fact that a revolution, as any other social development in general, can take place solely within the framework of one or another state. "...And a state," he noted, "presupposes frontiers. The state, of course, may hold a bourgeois government, but we need the Soviets. But even the Soviets are confronted with the question of frontiers." Therefore, "the method of socialist revolution under the slogan 'Down with frontiers', is all muddled up".²

The polemic over the national question flared up again in 1919 at the Eighth Party Congress during the discussion of the Party's draft Programme. Bukharin, Pyatakov and others opposed the inclusion of the right of nations to self-determination in the Programme on the grounds that it allegedly runs counter to the idea of proletarian dictatorship and in practice sanctifies the will of the bourgeoisie of those nations to which the socialist

¹ *The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks). Minutes*, Moscow, 1958, pp. 213, 215 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 299.

state gives the opportunity to "determine themselves". "Now," Pyatakov declared, "when we are building a militant International of the dictatorship of the proletariat, an International which all of us conceive as an International of centralised, united action ... it should not be permitted that the proletariat of individual nations could, and had the right to determine its own destiny, its line of conduct or its connection with the other insurgent sections of the labour party on its own. The international association of the proletariat is being created in order to enable it in every specific case to determine what decision should be taken from the standpoint of the revolutionary movement as a whole."¹ The "Leftists" completely failed to grasp the significance of the national factor and national aspirations, and took no account of the fact that the working masses could dispel the illusion of a national, extra-class community only on the basis of their own practical experience.

Lenin's biting sarcasm flayed the "national nihilism" of these "revolutionaries" and virtually demolished all their arguments. "And are we, the proletarians, to recognise the right to self-determination of the despised bourgeoisie? That is absolutely incompatible," he ironically summed up Bukharin's exclamations. And then to sober down his opponents said: "Pardon me, it is compatible with what actually exists. ... We cannot refuse to recognise what actually exists; it will itself compel us to recognise it."² Referring to the revolutionary movement in Poland as an example, he pointed out that "there the workers are being intimidated by statements to the effect that the Muscovites, the Great Russians, who have always oppressed the Poles, want to carry their Great Russian chauvinism into Poland in the guise of communism."³

¹ *Eighth Congress of the RCP(B)*, p. 79.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 170, 174.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Continuing, he warned: "Communism cannot be imposed by force. ... While foreseeing every stage of development in other countries, we must decree nothing from Moscow."¹ The political aspect of the Polish war proved the wisdom of Lenin's precautions.

"But the heaviest attack was levelled at Pyatakov. Here is an excerpt from a verbatim report of Lenin's concluding speech at the congress: "Many overenthusiastic comrades here went so far as to talk about a world Economic Council, and about subordinating all the national parties to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Comrade Pyatakov almost went as far as to say the same. (Pyatakov, from his place: 'Do you think that would be a bad thing?') Since he now says that it would not be a bad thing, I must reply that if there were anything like this in the programme, there would be no need to criticise it: the authors of such a proposal would have dug their own grave."²

Judging by the progress achieved by the socialist countries in recent years on the path to closer co-operation based on reciprocal respect for each other's independence and sovereignty, Lenin's criticism of the "Leftists" was absolutely justified. The friendship between socialist countries is the stronger the more it stems from free will and conviction engendered by historical experience. In the same polemic with Bukharin and Pyatakov at the Eighth Congress of the Party, Lenin agreed that economic unity was necessary, of course, and added: "But we must endeavour to secure it by propaganda, by agitation, by a voluntary alliance."³

So the triumph of internationalism was due solely to the consistent implementation of the Leninist principle of the self-determination of nations. This is borne out

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 175.

² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

by the more than fifty-year-long history of the multinational Soviet state. In this period the peoples of the world were able to compare the "completely different international relations which make it possible for all oppressed peoples to rid themselves of the imperialist yoke"¹ that were created by socialism, with the traditional capitalist relations of violence and dependence, domination and subjugation, which like a poisoned sword are deadly not only for the victim. The wielder of such a sword could have well joined Iacres in exclaiming: "Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric: I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery."² For had not the latest American aggression in Southeast Asia, for instance, brought on attacks of an internal malady which were mortally dangerous for the United States itself? Were not the disturbances, violence, arson in major US cities and the brutal assassinations of prominent political leaders of the Great American Democracy a payment of sorts for the war in Vietnam?

It should be recalled that such acts of the Soviet Government as the proclamation of independence of Finland, repudiation of unequal treaties with Turkey, Iran, Mongolia and China and, finally, peace with Poland were decried by those who consciously or unconsciously cherished the great-power, tsarist-inspired myth of a "single and indivisible Russia". But friendly relations with neighbouring states proved to be one of the pillars of Soviet Russia's firm international position. Having benefited the oppressed European nationalities, the revolution in Russia reaffirmed its great progressive importance. "We want a *voluntary* union of nations—a union which precludes any coercion of one nation by another—a union founded on complete confidence, on a clear recognition of brotherly unity, on absolutely voluntary

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 477.

² *The Works of Shakespeare*, Vol. IV, Moscow, 1938, p. 261.

consent."¹ The history of modern international relations shows that only such an approach makes it possible to surmount national prejudices and create a powerful international fraternity of nations.

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE— A STIMULUS TO WORLD REVOLUTION

After the defeat of the insurrections in the West there appeared ever clearer signs in Lenin's assessments that he was coming to regard the world revolution as a protracted, complicated and multifarious process, and therefore today we have every reason to speak of a world revolutionary *process*, whose strategy and tactics, according to Lenin, should be orientated on a prolonged struggle and patient accumulation of strength. Addressing himself to representatives of several foreign Communist parties, he surprised them by advising them to be more "opportunistic".²

Bourgeois observers completely failed to grasp the true meaning of Lenin's line in the Comintern, and not only because they were politically biased. Some asserted that revolution was the sole objective which Kremlin "prescribed" the non-Russian Communist parties, while others believed that the new orientation was a "retreat from world revolution".³ Actually, however, the ultimate aim remained unaltered, only the approach to it had broadened. It was Lenin's ever present confidence in the ultimate victory of the world revolutionary process that enabled him to develop a dynamic approach to Soviet policy, both internal and external, in keeping with which all the changes in the situation were promptly taken into

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 293.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 327.

³ Leonard Schapiro, *Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, New York, 1960, p. 218.

account. Had this confidence disappeared politics itself would have become stagnant and insouciant and amounted to no more than the administration of current affairs. It was this confidence that ensured a genuinely revolutionary re-orientation from War Communism to NEP, which was the socialist state's natural response to the changes in the international situation. In the field of foreign policy it was the concept of peaceful coexistence that mirrored this re-orientation.

Anti-Soviet Western commentators, however, assert that peaceful coexistence and international detente are allegedly "incompatible" with revolutionariness. Curiously enough, the voices of modern "ultra-Left" elements blend with those of the extreme reactionaries. The only difference being that the latter call peaceful coexistence the Soviet Union's tactical subterfuge, while the former consider that it is detrimental to the revolutionary forces. On the other hand, the prominent ideologist of the "ultra-Left" Professor Marcuse alleges that the policy of peaceful coexistence "contributed to the stahilisation of capitalism".¹ Today this claim is disproved by the explosion of economic and financial contradictions between the leading capitalist countries and the obvious facts attesting to the exceptional instability of their governments, while the policy of peaceful coexistence is continuing to gather momentum.

At first glance it seems that Right and "ultra-Left" ideologists pursue opposing political objectives: the former rely on extreme reactionary groupings which connect their welfare with a revival of the cold war, while the latter believe that they are dispelling reformist illusions and upholding the revolutionary spirit. Actually, by striving to discredit the Soviet peaceful coexistence foreign policy and detente, the ones and the others are weakening Left-wing forces and sowing discord in their

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, Boston, 1969, p. 84.

ranks. As a result, the "ultra-Left" are inadvertently playing into the hands of the reactionary policy which they find so disgusting.

In Lenin's day, when mortal danger time and again loomed over the young socialist state, the fragility of the peace did not make it less desirable. Its self-contained, let us not be afraid of this word, value only increased as the country acquired the bitter experience of war for which it paid with privations and blood. "We know, we know only too well," Lenin wrote, "the incredible misfortunes that war brings to the workers and peasants. For that reason our attitude to this question must be cautious and circumspect. We are ready to make the greatest concessions and sacrifices in order to preserve the peace for which we have paid such a high price."¹ As we re-read Lenin's works relating to the post-revolutionary period we cannot fail to see that he was becoming more and more appreciative of how terribly war weighed upon the people. "...Workers and peasants prized above all the blessings of peace," he said in 1921, "...having started on our work of peaceful development we shall exert every effort to continue it without interruption."² How greatly this contrasts with appeals for revolutionary war! But this contrast hinged on a new approach, that of a brilliant statesman for whom a prevision of the future was just as important as the settlement of immediate political issues. *

These words bring to mind Nadezhda Krupskaya's account of her conversation with Lenin in the last period of his life. Speaking about a technical invention, she recalled, he observed that "new inventions in science and technology would make our country's defence capability so great that any attack on it would be impossible. Then the conversation turned to the theme that ... when power

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 148.

² Ibid., pp. 150, 151.

is in the hands of the organised proletariat it uses it to destroy all exploitation and put an end to all slaughters."¹

"It cannot be said that this objective has already been attained, but there is no denying the fact that serious progress has been made in this direction since then. Lenin regarded peaceful coexistence as a transient condition and that is why Western Sovietologists and Eastern dogmatists draw the conclusion that he used this principle as a tactical manoeuvre. Actually, however, Lenin believed that a military clash between Soviet Russia and the capitalist world was inevitable because of the former's military weakness at that time. Consequently, the state of peace could be attained only as a result of a corresponding balance of strength which at the time was by no means in favour of the Soviet state. But as the Soviet Union and the fraternal socialist countries enhanced their socio-economic and military-political potential, the correlation of world forces changed radically, making it possible to resolve international contradictions and conflicts in keeping with the interests of peace and socialism. This is a fact which even Western observers cannot overlook. The well-known US economist John K. Galbraith noted in connection with Soviet-American agreements that the US Government's references to peaceful coexistence are indicative of the considerable progress which is to be put down to the Soviet Union's credit."²

The greatest headway in this direction has been made in recent years. Just as peaceful coexistence acquired an increasingly durable nature in Lenin's theory and practice, the process of filling peaceful coexistence with a constructive meaning and simultaneously weakening the explosion-fraught element of confrontation is continuing today, too. This is reflected in such a qualitative change in the international situation as the shift to detente, its

¹ *Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1957, pp. 808-09 (in Russian).

² *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 14, 1972.

consolidation and materialisation. The agreements signed by the Soviet Union with France, Federal Germany and the United States are milestones along this road. A special place is occupied by the historical Soviet-US treaty on the prevention of nuclear war. All this points to the radical change from the cold war to detente in the modern world, to the assertion of the principle of peaceful coexistence in the relations between the leading states with differing socio-economic systems.

Thanks to the improvement of the international situation the revolutionary forces struggling for socialism have scored important victories, the most outstanding of which was the termination of the imperialist aggression against Vietnam. The victory of the heroic people of Vietnam, the unification of both parts of Vietnam into a single state which has set itself the goal of building socialism, the transition of the people of neighbouring Laos to socialist construction prove that peaceful coexistence is conducive to the success of the revolutionary forces. On the other hand, it is characteristic that as long as the confrontation between the USSR and the USA existed the solution of this question in the interests of the peoples of Vietnam was unattainable. Most indicative is the headway made in resolving the Middle East issue. The Soviet Union's vast and effective assistance to the Arab countries in the struggle to overcome the consequences of the Israeli aggression is well known, but it is also common knowledge that this assistance was combined with the Soviet Union's struggle to maintain peaceful coexistence with the United States, to localise the Middle East conflict and resolve it politically. It was this struggle that not only made it possible to reduce international tension but also gave the Arab countries important political advantages.

The fundamental change in the international situation has been ensured by the concerted foreign policy of the socialist countries, which rests on the combined military

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might of the entire world socialist system. This is something the leaders of the capitalist states, with whom the governments of the socialist countries are negotiating, take into account. After a series of meetings with leading Western politicians, Leonid Brezhnev said that the "unity of the socialist countries, and our close co-operation underlie all our achievements in the matter of detente".¹

This is a historical turn in favour of both peace and socialism, for the interests of peace and socialism are inseparable. It has demonstrated the mounting world popularity of the socialist community's foreign policy aims and their complete conformity with the interests of the broadest masses in all countries. For by deciding to conclude long-term agreements with the Soviet Union these countries were compelled fundamentally to revise their strategic conceptions and the entire, so to say, "foreign policy philosophy" and to adopt, in place of the old doctrines of "rolling back" and "containing" communism, the principle of peaceful coexistence as the basis of their relations with the USSR and its allies. This principle, which the young Soviet Republic in Lenin's time had to push through with great difficulty in its relations with the capitalist world, has now become the fundamental principle of international law and international relations.

The successful outcome of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is an exceptionally important embodiment and victory of this principle. The concluding stage of the conference in 1975, which in fact was an unprecedented meeting of the heads of 33 European states and the USA and Canada, approved the Final Act with the Declaration of Principles, a concerted code of behaviour for states with differing social systems, based on the principle of peaceful coexistence. It is important to note that this code incorporates such crucial principles as

¹ *Izvestia*, August 16, 1973.

inviolability of the frontiers finalising the results of the Second World War, and sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states, including socialist ones, of course, which, incidentally, attests to the collapse of the imperialist plans of "rolling back" socialism. It also stipulates the right of peoples freely to choose and develop their political, social, economic and cultural systems, which is consistent with the approach of Communist revolutionaries to history, their recognition that revolutionary transformations are natural and justified.

The firm establishment of the principle of peaceful coexistence thanks to the Soviet Union's peaceful offensive is beneficial to the class struggle waged by the socialist, democratic forces abroad. They have scored some major gains: the democratic revolution in Portugal and the abolition of the last—Portuguese—colonial empire, disintegration of the Franco regime in Spain, the overthrow of the dictatorship of the "black colonels" in Greece, important victories of Left-wing forces in elections in France and Italy, removal from power of reactionary, pro-imperialist circles in Panama and Peru and the formation of patriotic, socialist-orientated governments there, and the emergence of the people's democratic republics of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. The Soviet Union has always furnished moral and political, and whenever necessary, material aid to the newly-free states, particularly to those which have taken a socialist path of development.

This, naturally, evokes protests from imperialist politicians who take the defeats of reaction very much to heart and falsely accuse the Soviet Union of violating the "spirit of detente". All these charges were strongly rebuffed by General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Leonid Brezhnev at the 25th CPSU Congress. He said: "Some bourgeois leaders affect surprise and raise a howl over the solidarity of Soviet Communists, the Soviet people, with the struggle of other peoples for

freedom and progress. This is either outright naivety or more likely a deliberate befuddling of minds. It could not be clearer, after all, that detente and peaceful coexistence have to do with interstate relations. This means above all that disputes and conflicts between countries are not to be settled by war, by the threat or use of force.

Detente does not in the slightest abolish, nor can it abolish or alter, the laws of the class struggle. No one should expect that because of the detente Communists will reconcile themselves with capitalist exploitation or that monopolists will become followers of the revolution."¹

All these gains have dispelled the pessimism and mistrust which at a certain period had overtaken some representatives of the Left forces in the West, and cut the ground from under the feet of the dangerous "ultra-revolutionism". The facts show that if socialism is to be the ultimate goal of the revolutionary movement then peaceful coexistence is its optimal condition.

It cannot be said, of course, that history everywhere develops in one direction only. The revolutionary-democratic movement does not always score victories: it passes through declines and defeats. In Chile, for instance, the military-fascist junta managed to overthrow Salvador Allende's democratically elected constitutional government backed by a broad front of popular forces.

In such acute situations the spirit of peaceful coexistence manifests its potency. The military circles in Chile, guilty as they are of numerous crimes, cannot ignore world public opinion whose opposition to the fascist putschists was never more determined and whose moral prestige was never higher than at present. The ruling circles of Israel, which is armed to the teeth, nonetheless, do not venture as they did before to begin a war against

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 25th CPSU Congress and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy*, p. 39.

the Arab states enjoying overwhelming international support. Even the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia are compelled to make concessions, even if insignificant, to the indigenous population in order to avoid a head-on collision with African states, which also have the sympathies of the majority of countries.

If there were a different balance of forces in the world and peaceful coexistence were rejected by bourgeois countries, the extreme reactionary circles would possibly manage, with the help of military intervention, to avert such a course of events so undesirable to them, undermine peaceful coexistence and strike even more telling blows at the revolutionary forces. But reaction does not venture to resort to these measures because the dialectical unity of the interests of socialism and peace proves effective in practice. Cyrus Sulzberger, a leading US columnist, justifiably linked Moscow's patient skilled diplomacy with the victories of the national liberation movement, the weakening of the positions of the revenge-seeking forces and the rift in political unity in the NATO area.⁴ But if for a champion of capitalism this is a forced admission and not a very pleasant one at that, the consistent revolutionaries meet such a course of events with great satisfaction.

"The attempts of imperialism to overcome its internal contradictions by building up international tension and creating hotbeds of war are hampered by the policy of peaceful coexistence. This policy does not imply either the preservation of the socio-political status quo or a weakening of the ideological struggle. It helps to promote the class struggle against imperialism on a national and world-wide scale."²

¹ See *New York Times*, December 6, 1972.

² *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow 1969, Prague, 1969*, p. 31.

It is interesting to note that even Professor Marcuse, who opposes peaceful coexistence, agrees that without Soviet aid "the effective resistance in Vietnam and the protection of Cuba"¹ would have been impossible, and does so without even noticing that he contradicts himself: for this aid is in fact the embodiment of the principle of peaceful coexistence.

For it is also beyond doubt that the most ardent champion of this principle is a state which instinctively responds to any democratic revolution in any part of the world with sympathy and, consequently, with maximum assistance. On this basis George Kennan writes about the "ambiguity and contradictoriness of Soviet policy"² and falls into error, for these elements of Soviet foreign policy have fused into a single whole. In this respect Professor Carr is much more correct when he writes about a "synthesis" established since the time of Brest-Litovsk Peace between the national interests of the Soviet Republic and the interests of the world revolution.³ Incidentally, this fusion is a law of all great revolutions which gradually put the almost cosmic understanding of their objectives within the framework of their national interests and possibilities, which is determined by the transition of the revolutionary society from the "plasmic" state into a state of relative stability.

It was only natural that a thinker who interpreted the place of national revolutions in the world process under a new angle became the author of the concept of peaceful coexistence. Moreover, Lenin was the first to discover the *state of peaceful coexistence* as a new historical quality which none of the revolutionaries could even imagine at the outset of the revolution. "But is the existence of a

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 85.

² George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, Boston and Toronto, 1962, p. 166.

³ See Edward Hallett Carr, *Studies in Revolution*, London, 1950, pp. 147-48.

socialist republic in a capitalist environment at all conceivable? It seemed inconceivable from political and military aspects. That it is possible both politically and militarily has now been proved; it is a fact. But what about trade? What about economic relations? Contacts, assistance, the exchange of services between backward, ruined agricultural Russia and the advanced, industrially developed group of capitalist countries—is all this possible?"¹

And so, as if thinking aloud, Lenin was bringing the Party closer to realising the necessity and the inevitability of *developing Soviet foreign policy and the natural need for its continuous improvement*.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 151.

CONCLUSION

The history of Marxism is the history of the struggle for the consolidation of the leading role of the masses and the defence of their interests, against their being subject to oppression, against their material and spiritual exploitation, against the elevation of so-called "heroes" by belittling the role of ordinary working people. Lenin expressed consistently and to the end Marxism's resolute opposition to all sorts of anti-democratic ideas. This was reflected in his first writings in which he devastatingly criticised the Narodnik theory of the "hero and the mob", and in his principles of organising a Party of a new type, principles of democratic centralism designed to create a live and free atmosphere within the Party and to establish strict Party discipline on the basis of the minority following the majority. This finds reflection in Leninism's creative nature which gives a profound scientific analysis of new social processes and rejects the outdated conceptions even if they are illumined by the aura of recognised authorities, in the continuous account of the vital interests of the masses, in the profound democratism of Lenin's political prevision, in the modesty of his private life.

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Because egoism was wholly alien to Lenin as a political leader of a new type—he had no personal interests other than the interests of society—his influence on history and contemporaneity is intransient. The reader now knows that his links with the masses, his identification with them, precise expression of their frequently subconscious aspirations were the main source of his political astuteness, and that the interests of the masses were the main criteria of his political decisions. When the petty-bourgeois parties accused the Bolsheviks of undertaking a task they themselves had not fully grasped, Lenin called it a "ludicrous accusation". He wrote: "As if one can set out to make a great revolution and know beforehand how it is to be completed! Such knowledge cannot be derived from books and our decision could spring only from the experience of the masses. And I say that it is to our credit that amidst incredible difficulties we undertook to solve a problem with which we inspired the proletarian masses to display their own initiative."¹

But if close kinship with the people was one of the wellsprings of the freshness and topicality of his social theory and practice, the other source was his anti-dogmatism, the mighty creative force of his intellect, or, in other words, its genuinely scientific character. This quality springs from a clear understanding of the imperfection of all patterns, of the inevitably continuous development of theory and practice. Thus, the scientific character of his intellect was revolutionary just as any truly great scholar, who not only follows up the experience of his predecessors but also charts new paths, is a revolutionary in his own field. Here is what Lenin wrote in this connection: "For the present it is essential to grasp the incontestable truth that a Marxist must take cognisance of real life, of the true facts of *reality*, and not cling to a theory of yesterday, which, like all theories, at best only outlines

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 155.

the main and the general, only *comes near* to embracing life in all its complexity."¹

Kinship with the people and scientific character do not assert themselves easily, or automatically. We have seen how difficult were the first steps of the victorious proletarian revolution, how hard it was for the Party and the people to discover the most effective path towards the building of socialist society and how great were the sacrifices involved in this search. "Of the problems we tackled," Lenin wrote, "not one was solved at the first attempt; every one of them had to be taken up a second time. After suffering defeat we tried again, we did everything all over again; if we could not find an absolutely correct solution to a problem we tried to find one that was at least satisfactory. That is how we acted in the past, and that is how we must continue to act in the future."²

But the reader also has a chance fully to appreciate the audacity of the proletarian revolution and of the plan for socialist construction put forward by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, the infinite dedication of the people building socialism, the inexhaustible energy of the creative forces unfettered by the revolution, and the multiformity of the working people's political activity.

Leninism's greatness lies in the fact that Lenin's innovatory approach is felt in virtually all spheres of social relations. We were not in a position to analyse all these spheres but what we have said shows Lenin's exceptionally great contribution to the elaboration of such problems as the decisive significance of socio-economic prerequisites for revolution coupled with the great importance of the subjective factor; the leading role of the working class at all phases of the revolution and the need to preserve proletarian, revolutionary ideology; the vast revolutionising significance of the independent activity of the mas-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 45.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 98.

ses and the need for their firm science-based guidance by the Marxist-Leninist Party; the impossibility of a "pure" social revolution and the need to take account of the sentiments and demands of the intermediate social strata; the unavoidable breakdown of the old machinery of state coupled with the expediency and inevitability of using some of its elements; the changes in the forms and the degree of acuteness of the class struggle depending on the stage of development of the revolution; the creative approach to the theory of scientific communism and the need continuously to enrich it on the basis of practical experience; the need to regard the revolutionary movement in every country as a component of the single world revolutionary process; external peace as the best possible condition for the development of the revolution. All these problems of social science and practical activity are of universal importance. And the contribution to their solution points to the world-historic nature of Leninism, to the fact that Lenin's teaching does not belong to the Soviet Union alone, and that it is a theory and policy of international importance and as such has been accepted by the world working-class and communist movement.

As though expressing universal confidence in this movement, the leader of the Cuban Communists Fidel Castro said in his speech at the 25th CPSU Congress: "It can be said that since the October Revolution ever new generations of revolutionaries have been reared on the basis of its ideas, spirit and principles. No other event has ever exerted such influence on people's minds, on the destinies of nations and on world progress."¹

Since the establishment of the Soviet Union the working masses, all progressive people throughout the world harbouring hopes of their own emancipation, have been

¹ *Pravda*, February 26, 1976.

regarding the Soviet Union as a land of a great experiment. Now it is no longer an experiment, since the Soviet Union is an example of concrete accomplishments in all spheres of human activity. Credit for this should be given to Leninism, to the CPSU's Leninist approach to theory and practice. "As an eternally living and developing teaching, Leninism has been, remains and will be in the centre of the Party's ideological life, and the foundation of all its revolutionary transformative activity."¹

REQUEST TO READERS

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¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, p. 438.